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English Worthies

EDITED BY ANDREW LANG

MARLBOROUGH

WITHDRAWN

BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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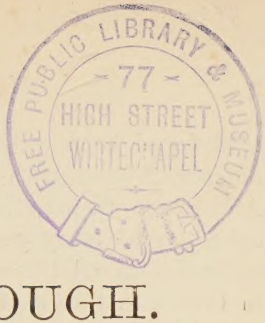

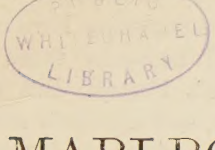

MARLBOROUGH.

CHAPTER I.

YOUTH AND EARLY CAMPAIGNS.

JOHN CHURCHILL, Duke of Marlborough, is the subject of not the least known or the worst executed of standard biographies in English.[1] He has also been celebrated

[1] *Memoirs of the Duke of Marlborough*, by W. Coxe. The edition used here is that edited by J. Wade in Bohn's Standard Library, 3 vols. 8vo. with atlas in 4to. Although Coxe wrote more than sixty years ago, it is surprising how few mistakes have been detected in his work, and how few valuable additions have been made to it by the abundant overhauling of documents which the last half-century has seen. A short bibliography of works on Marlborough will be found subjoined to the Index. It is said that the best known English soldier of the present day has an elaborate work on Marlborough in preparation, or at least in contemplation. The excellent little book of Mrs. Creighton (London, 1879) deserves mention here all the more that my attempt in no way competes with hers. Her object was to sketch the history of England and Europe as Marlborough was concerned with it; mine is to attempt a portrait of Marlborough's life and character, taking knowledge of the historical surroundings mostly for granted. The only other recent book which has to be mentioned is the late Dr. J. Hill Burton's *Reign of Queen Anne* (3 vols. Edinburgh and London, 1880), a singular mixture of desultory learning and capricious judgment, which will sometimes be quoted.

or defamed, criticised or merely anecdotised by a vast number of other pens, whose productions have not, like Archdeacon Coxe's, furnished necessary items to the catalogue of every gentleman's library. But what is noticeable in all these books, and especially noticeable in Coxe's, is the disproportionate space allotted to his period of brilliant military success and political influence. Marlborough was fifty-two years old at the accession of Queen Anne; he outlived her eight years. Yet a not too laborious calculation will establish the fact that Coxe gives about one-twentieth of his entire space to the first five-sevenths of his hero's life. That to the purely military historian the history of those brilliant campaigns in which, alone of great modern soldiers, Marlborough proved himself invincible for a long series of years, dwarfs all the rest of his history may be freely granted; that he contributed more to the making of the English Empire in these years than in any others is also certain. Finally (a circumstance which, biographers being human, must be allowed its weight), the material available for biographical use during these years far exceeds in amount the material available for the rest of the life. But it is seldom that in the case of a man of great parts, and raised to fortune not by the mere turn of fortune's wheel, it is safe to concentrate attention on one part of his career. For the estimate of Marlborough's character and personality, which is the chief object here, the desertion of James II. is a matter certainly not to be treated less fully than the battle of Blenheim, or the question of complicity in the *guet-apens* at Brest than the circumstances of the victory of Malplaquet.

Marlborough was born on Midsummer day, 1650, at Ashe, a Devonshire manorhouse, between Axminster and Seaton, which is still in existence. His father, Sir Winston Churchill (who, however, was not yet knighted), had been a man of some property, a soldier, and in his way an author, nor is his folio of English history, 'Divi Britannici,' more deserving of the scorn which Macaulay's pen throws as a matter of course on the production of a Cavalier squire than might be expected. But Ashe was not a seat of the Churchills; it belonged, and continued to belong till the end of the last century, to the old Devonshire family of Drake, the Drakes, with whom Sir Francis was not connected, though he assumed their arms, and was thereby involved in a somewhat ludicrous quarrel. Mary Drake (others call her Elizabeth), John Churchill's mother and Sir Winston's wife, was the granddaughter of the Sir Bernard Drake whose family pride had declined to welcome a distinguished but *parvenu* namesake, and the Churchill property of Mintern[1] having been sequestrated she was fain to seek a refuge with her own family. All her children from Winston, the eldest son, who died young, were born at Ashe. John was the second son, and of the other children the most notable were George, John's younger brother, and Arabella, his eldest sister, the mistress of James II. and the mother of Berwick. No one seems to have discovered in any Churchill ancestor a forewarning of the extraordinary military genius which in this generation

[1] Sir Winston Churchill's designation is of 'Wooton Glanville.' Wooton Glanville and Mintern (Magna and Parva) are neighbouring villages of Dorset nearly in the centre of the county, and between Cerne Abbas and Sherborne.

John showed in his own person and Arabella transmitted to her son, but the family was an old one, and had 'come over with Richard Conqueror.' Very little is recorded of Marlborough's early youth. His father and a neighbouring clergyman are said to have given him such education as he possessed, though after the Restoration (when Sir Winston, more fortunate than many Cavaliers, was not merely knighted but recovered his estate and obtained some post about Court) he was for a time—it is not certainly known how long—at St. Paul's School. One of the rare stories about his early days recounts that he was fond of reading the Latin tactician Vegetius. The evidence is, as evidence of anecdotes goes, indifferent good, for the Rev. G. North, rector of Colyton, testified that he heard it from an eyewitness and schoolfellow of Churchill's about two years after the Duke's death. Intrinsically it is suspicious, and the suggestion of rationalists that, instead of reading, the future warrior was looking at the illustrations, possesses plausibility; but there is no reason for regarding it as impossible that Marlborough may have had and forgotten a smattering of Latin, while Macaulay exaggerates, as usual, the badness of his English spelling. Facsimiles of his writing are easily accessible, and will show anyone who is at all conversant with seventeenth-century ways that Marlborough in this branch of accomplishment was little worse than most men not professed scholars, and a great deal better than most women. The well-known saying that he learnt all the English history he knew out of Shakespeare is another of the anecdotes which only dulness takes literally. The son of the author of 'Divi Britannici' is

nearly certain to have received historical instruction from the author of that work, though if Shakespeare's teaching stuck in his memory better it is not to his discredit. The story, however, is of some value as illustrating the baselessness, easily proved from other sources, of a notion—often put forward in vulgar histories of literature and the stage—that Shakespeare was forgotten in England during the last half of the seventeenth century.

The success of the Churchill family at Court is made a rather awkward subject by the notorious fact that Arabella Churchill, who became maid of honour to the Duchess of York (the first Duchess, Anne Hyde) soon after the Restoration, also became the mistress of her mistress's husband. It is, however, asserted, or hoped, by the biographers that John's appointment to an ensigncy in the Foot Guards at the age of sixteen preceded the *liaison* between James and Arabella. If the Duke of Berwick was right as to the date of his own birth[1] there is fortunately no unsurmountable difficulty in accepting the more charitable view of the foundation, if not the rise, of Marlborough's fortunes. Appointed page to the Duke, he is said to have taken advantage of James's presence at a review, and of his asking what profession the boy preferred, to beg for a pair of colours. James, though always careful of money, was not at this time ungenerous or churlish to his friends, and it is not necessary to believe that the sister's dishonour bought the brother's entrance into the career where he afterwards won more honour for himself and

[1] He says (*Mémoires*, ed. Michaud et Poujoulat, xxxi. 371), 'Je naquis le 21 août 1670.' John Churchill was 16 in 1666.

England than almost any other Englishman. At the same time, considering the manners of the Court and the morals of the time, he would be a very rash man who did more than point out that such a belief is not necessary. Scandal, however, is not contented with attacking the origin of Churchill's fortune; and considering the facts just mentioned, and the animus of his political enemies in later life, it would be strange if it had been so contented. That at some time or other he attracted the attention of Barbara Palmer is pretty certain, but it is disputed whether this occurred before or after he made the journey to Tangier, which then formed the usual and only turn of foreign service for the small regular army of England. He did not stay at Tangier long, and on returning home was received with open arms by the Duke of York, by the Duchess of Cleveland, and apparently by her royal lover, who never affected an excessive jealousy. The best known story of his connection with Barbara Palmer is that, being on one occasion surprised, or nearly so, by Charles, he leaped out of a window and was presented by his mistress with 5,000*l.*, 4,500*l.* of which he invested on an annuity of 500*l.* a year, which he bought from Halifax, or which was at any rate secured on Halifax's estate. Of the fact of this annuity transaction there is no doubt, the papers existing. The origin of the money has the at least respectable authority of Chesterfield,[1]

[1] Chesterfield does not vouch for the window story, which is probably due to the fertile invention of Swift's friend, Mrs. Manley. Chesterfield merely says that, 'struck by his genius, she gave him' the 5,000*l.* There was a legend that royal jealousy sent him to Tangier. This may pair off with the other legend that Mulgrave was sent to the same place in a leaky ship in hopes to drown him.

who was the son of Halifax's daughter. Putting aside the question of immorality in the connection itself, it must be remembered that the mere fact of receiving money from a woman was not at all discreditable according to seventeenth-century etiquette. But undoubtedly the contemporaries of Rochester and Etherege would have thought better of Captain Churchill if he had spent the money he got from one mistress on another or several others.

But not even in this heyday of his blood was John Churchill a mere man of pleasure. The annuity transaction dates from 1674, and at least two years before Churchill had begun to see service very different from the parades of Whitehall and the razzias of Tangier. The occasion was the discreditable combination of England with France, in virtue of the Treaty of Dover, in 1672. A contingent of 6,000 English troops was then sent nominally under the Duke of Monmouth to join Turenne, and Churchill, as captain, commanded the Grenadier company of Monmouth's own regiment. Although the enemy were greatly overmatched, the reduction of the strong fortresses which guarded the Dutch frontier under such a leader was necessarily of no small value as education for a young soldier. Churchill repeatedly distinguished himself, the siege of Nimeguen being especially mentioned as the occasion of his attracting Turenne's attention, and winning from him the name of 'the handsome Englishman.'[1] From this time

The fact is that the Tangier service, which, as has been seen, was practically incumbent on English soldiers, was extremely unpopular, and all sorts of stories were got up about it.

[1] It should be said, however, that these stories of his service with Turenne are founded upon no solid evidence.

dates the second of the generally known anecdotes which concerns this time. An advanced post having been given up to the enemy, Turenne is said to have betted a supper and a dozen of claret (but Bordeaux was not then the fashionable wine in France) that 'his handsome Englishman' would recover it with half the number of men who had abandoned it. The wager was of course won, or the anecdote would not have been told. In 1673 another siege, that of Maestricht, brought even more credit to Churchill, who not only led the stormers with Monmouth, but after the successful explosion of a mine had enabled the enemy to recover their ground, took part in a second forlorn hope again with success, being in consequence thanked by Louis at the head of the army, and presented by Monmouth to Charles II. as his 'saviour.' His military service with the French army appears to have extended over nearly five years, but the information on the subject is mainly conjectural. He was certainly appointed colonel of the English regiment by Louis on April 3, 1674, but the proofs of his participation in Turenne's last campaign and in the two campaigns following appear to be wanting. His military occupations, however, did not sever him from the household of the Duke of York, in which he was successively Gentleman of the Bedchamber and Master of the Robes. He was still more closely bound to this service by his marriage, the circumstances of which will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

MARRIAGE, AND ATTACHMENT TO PRINCESS ANNE.

In hardly any man's life does his marriage hold a higher place of importance than in Marlborough's. If John Churchill had never met Sarah Jennings, or if the obstacles put in the way of their marriage had prevented it, it is still improbable that a man of such commanding talents in peace and war would have failed to take his part in stirring times such as those in which he lived. He might still have served and deserted James, still have faced both ways under William, and still have obtained distinction in the war of the Spanish Succession. But it is extremely improbable that he would have been in a position to dispose almost at his pleasure of the whole power of England for several years, and so to overcome the difficulties which lie in the path of the servant of a constitutional monarchy, the general of a confederate force. To estimate what Mrs. Freeman was to Mr. Freeman's military opportunities, it is only necessary to compare the careers of Marlborough and of Wellington.

Sarah Jennings was the younger daughter of Richard Jennings of Sandridge, in Hertfordshire, a squire of respectable position, ancient family, and fair fortune, which latter, however, was of necessity divided among a some-

what numerous family. The escapades and the beauty of her elder sister Frances, who married Count George (according to English rank, Sir George) Hamilton, the brother of Anthony Hamilton, have been recorded in Anthony's delightful 'Mémoires de Grammont.' Sarah was far less flighty than her sister, and though she was also less beautiful she was still attractive. The exact character of her face in youth is not easy to determine; for in one of Marlborough's domestic epistles he hopes that his daughter Henrietta's nose has 'grown straight, like her mother's,' while in Kneller's portrait of the duchess the nose is decidedly, though not more than becomingly, *retroussé*. The same portrait, however, gives no idea of the ill-temper and self-will which too deservedly rank among the best-known characteristics of the Duchess of 'Molberry,' as she is styled, according to the phonetic spelling of the title in the 'Wentworth Papers;' and report seems to agree that in her youth her complexion, hair and figure were all exceptionally advantageous. Colonel Churchill, ten years her senior, fell in love with her when she was only sixteen, and it does not seem that he was ever less in love with her during the more than forty years of their marriage. The exact character of his affection has been a good deal discussed, and the late Mr. Hill Burton has perhaps been happier than in some of his other comments on Marlborough, in defining it to be fear of losing his wife's love. In other words, he was rather uxorious than henpecked, and in the abundant correspondence which we possess there does not so much appear any undue docility to her bad humours as a fervent desire that she should be in a good humour. When she was in such a

humour, he seems to have constantly preferred her society to anything else, even to his own pecuniary and worldly interest. The abundance of disquisition on Duchess Sarah's peculiarities (which I shall endeavour not to imitate here) has not spared inquiry as to how far she returned this unique devotion. Her letters to him are rarely of an *intime* character, and as she was long the chief channel of intercourse between him and his party in England there is some excuse for this. Indeed, the whole evidence against her having been as loving a wife as her rough temper would permit is purely negative. That she was a faithful one in the ordinary sense there is not the slightest reason for doubting; at least, any one who doubts may, if he likes, also adopt the belief that Marlborough was a coward, or that he was the lover of Anne, as they used to think on the Continent, or any other inevitable commonplace of scandal. Sarah has had few thoroughgoing defenders, and indeed there is not to posterity, whatever there may have been to Marlborough, anything particularly lovable about her. She was certainly *pars maxima* of her husband's fortunes. With his downfall she had, as I shall endeavour to show, much less to do than the lovers of gossiping history and the devotees of the doctrine of small causes and great events have usually pretended.

The marriage itself, however, was not brought about without considerable difficulties; the relations of both parties being much averse to the match on the same score of want of fortune. The most curious thing, however, is that the date, place, and circumstances of the actual ceremony seem to be unknown. The nearest indication of the time is taken to be an endorsement of

a letter from Churchill to Miss Jennings, dated Brussels, April 12, 1678. This endorsement runs, 'I believe I was married when this letter was written, but it was not known to any but the duchess.' On the other hand, the first child of the marriage, Henrietta, afterwards duchess in her own right, was not born till July 20, 1681. Husband and wife, however (if they were then husband and wife), were much separated in the interval, and the tone of the letter which bears the endorsement is much more that of a husband who has not ceased to be a lover, than of a lover who has not yet become a husband. From the duchess's curious expression, '*I believe* I was married,' it may perhaps not be fanciful to conclude that the ceremony had actually been performed, but that, either owing to a sudden summons abroad or to a wish to keep the matter secret, it had been merely a ceremony. By the summer Churchill must have been able to publish his proceeding and to obtain his parents' approval, for his wife went to stay with the Churchill family at Mintern. The uncertainty, therefore, can only extend to the early months of 1677–78.

The first year of the marriage, however, saw yet another separation of the pair, for Churchill was appointed Brigadier-General under Monmouth in the brief and abortive expedition sent to support the Prince of Orange against France. No blow was struck by the troops which Churchill commanded, and the peace speedily sent him back to England. Up to this time he had taken little part in politics, properly so called, and indeed domestic politics had been in something of a lull for many years. The Popish Plot, the Exclusion Bill, and the Parliamentary struggles of the last years

of Charles II. could not fail to concern very closely one who was certainly the ablest and perhaps the most trusted of the Duke of York's servants. There was still no break in his direct attachment to his patron, for it was not till the Princess Anne's marriage and separate establishment in 1683 that she could be regarded as an independent or quasi-independent patroness. Both Colonel Churchill and his wife accompanied the Duke and Duchess of York when they were compelled by the popular feeling to leave England in the spring of 1679, and Churchill also bore his master company on his almost clandestine visit to Charles in the summer. He then received an extremely important if not extremely honourable appointment, being sent to Paris to conduct those private negotiations between Charles and Louis which, whatever their immediate object, meant in the long run the damage or the disgrace of England. He accompanied James back to Brussels, and was with him when he was sent to Scotland in a kind of honourable banishment. During 1680 he was chiefly resident at Edinburgh, though he was despatched on more than one mission of James's restless secret diplomacy, the most important being to London in January, 1680–81, in which the object was to prevail on the king to enter into a yet stricter alliance with Louis, to persist in not summoning a Parliament, and, in short, to carry out the same policy of provocation which afterwards proved fatal to James himself. These are the earliest transactions in which Marlborough's public conduct can be said to be dubious. Yet it must be remembered that the extreme Whig party were as much tainted with the gold of France as Charles and James; that in the incredible height to which party spirit had

run, owing chiefly to the machinations of Shaftesbury, it might well seem a quarrel of life and death between the Royalist and the Republican party; that Marlborough himself, though circumstances in later life brought him into alliance with the Whigs, was undoubtedly, if he was anything, a Tory at heart; and that, as the bitterest and the least scrupulous of recent historians has admitted, if the chief object of the sovereign was to infringe the privileges of the Legislature, the chief object of the Legislature was also to encroach on the prerogative of the sovereign. When Algernon Sidney could definitely arrange for an English insurrection in conjunction with French troops, and could pocket Barillon's guineas, it is not surprising that Churchill should not have been straitlaced about negotiations on the part of persons, constitutionally at any rate, entitled so to negotiate for similar objects. It is unfortunately certain that no single English politician of eminence and ability—not even Halifax—kept a wholly straight course in these difficult times. Indeed, Marlborough's enemies have, as a rule, laid little stress on this part of his conduct; and as we shall have to take a more lenient view than they do of his whole character, it is as well to acknowledge at once that this part of it is not beyond reproach. The Churchills' eldest child, Henrietta, was born, as has been said, in the summer of 1681, Mrs. Churchill being then in London. Churchill himself accompanied James on his return from Scotland next year (the return magnificently celebrated by Dryden in more than one piece of verse), was wrecked with him in the 'Gloucester' on the Lemon and Ore Sandbank, and was among the few that escaped. He

soon had his reward for these years of active and not altogether unrisky service, being created in 1682 Baron Churchill of Eyemouth, in the peerage of Scotland, and appointed to the colonelcy of a newly raised dragoon regiment—the First Royals. Macaulay has printed a doggerel contemporary complaint of this as jobbery, the point of which is that Churchill had hitherto served in and commanded regiments of foot only. But the dragoon, as is well known, was regarded as a kind of mounted infantryman, and considering the fashion in which then and long afterwards regiments were given to persons of distinction, who were totally unversed in military affairs, the appointment will hardly be considered one of the sins of the Stuarts. Shortly afterwards, Lady Churchill, on the marriage of the Princess Anne, who had now been her attached friend for years, was appointed Lady of the Bedchamber in the Princess of Denmark's establishment. The friendship of the two, or rather the subjection of Anne to the imperious Sarah, grew ever closer, but nothing else of public or private importance concerning Churchill himself is recorded during the last two years of Charles II.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE REIGN OF JAMES II.

At the accession of James II. to the throne there was hardly anyone who seemed to stand higher for that royal favour which never counted for more than at this period than John Lord Churchill. He had exactly reached the half-way house of ordinary human life, and he had for very many years had experience of men and of affairs. At this time no vice, even by the account of his enemies, was chargeable against him except avarice; and hitherto his gains had of necessity been gains rather of parsimony than of dubious acquisition, according to the morals of the time, for it must be repeated that very few men in the late seventeenth century would have blamed him for receiving money from Lady Castlemaine. His posts hitherto, though not very lucrative according to the standard of the age, had been profitable, and he was able, when the estate of Sandridge fell to his wife and her two sisters as co-heiresses, to buy out the sisters and to establish himself at Holywell House, near St. Albans, which was his country seat till the building of Blenheim. Mintern went to his younger brother Charles, a fact which, though the details appear to be imperfectly known, would

seem to show that Marlborough, accused as he is of grasping, did not carry his acquisitiveness into family matters. Lady Churchill at this time was still quite a young woman and still handsome, and more than ever intimate with, or rather ascendant over, the Princess Anne. 'Atossa' has filled, and must necessarily fill, a large space in every biography of her husband. But, as has been hinted, it is extremely difficult to say anything good for her except that she was at one time pretty, and that Marlborough loved her. The imperiousness which has always been charged against her was in truth the least of her unpleasant qualities. While there is, as has been pointed out, not very much evidence that she really appreciated or even strongly reciprocated the steady attachment of her husband, it is certain that she was abominably ungrateful to Anne. Her self-seeking was (as is the manner of women when they are self-seeking at all) pure and unalloyed with any spark of honour, gratitude, patriotism, decency, or moderation. She was not, as her husband, with all his faults, evidently was, sincerely religious. Her family affection was merely selfish, and did not in the least prevent her from being a curse to her family. She had not even the magnanimity which sometimes accompanies imperious temper; and, in short, it is difficult to discover even a negative good quality in her except that she was not a hypocrite, and that her intellectual abilities were very considerable. Her writings, though unpolished, are singularly vigorous; and her account of the rise and progress of the family of Abigail Hill would, if it were fiction, imply genius.

Her husband, on the other hand, had up to this

time done little or nothing to discredit himself. Enough has already been said of his early Court *fredaines*, and of his participation in the negotiations for enslaving England to France and violating the constitution of the former country, not indeed in the letter but in the spirit. On a third point, and a very important one, both in the opinion of the time and in his own history, his record is even more creditable. No competent authority has ever impugned Marlborough's religious sincerity, and Macaulay's covert sneer at it is more than compensated by the acknowledgments of Thackeray, not of course an authority on historical details, but a man violently prejudiced against Marlborough, well acquainted with the particular documents, and a fearless critic of religious hypocrisy.[1] No one to whom it is still a puzzle that men of Marlborough's type should have constantly done acts apparently in direct contravention of their religious principles, and should yet have been sincerely religious, need hope to understand history of this or indeed of any other time. No one who, in face of the documents that exist, questions Marlborough's sincerity as a Christian and as a member of the Church of England, can hope to understand Marlborough. But I shall have to deal more fully with this when the question of his desertion of James II. is reached at the end of this chapter. The first apology of Coxe, that 'he had hitherto regarded with indul-

[1] Compare Macaulay's *History*, i. 452 (2-vol. ed.): 'It soon appeared that there was no guilt and no disgrace which he was not ready to incur in order to escape the necessity of parting either with his places or with his religion;' and *Esmond*, p. 224 (1-vol. ed.), as to Marlborough's language about his victories.

gence the failings of a prince to whom he was bound by so many ties,' is of course valueless. But the positive statement that Marlborough, at the very beginning of James's reign, assured Galway that 'if the king should attempt to change our religion and constitution I would instantly quit his service' stands on very different grounds. It is, as far as it goes, and if it be accepted, positive evidence; it is consistent with what followed, and it to a great extent excuses what followed, though by no means wholly.

The very beginning of the new reign brought Churchill promotion of various kinds. Louis, as is well known, no sooner heard of Charles II.'s death than he sent a large present of money to the new king of England—a present which not only James himself and Sunderland, but men of supposed honour like Rochester and Godolphin, accepted with joy only tempered by a desire for more. Before the new reign was ten days old Churchill was despatched as envoy extraordinary to Paris to return thanks for the gift in secret and to deliver a formal notification of James's accession in public. It is on this occasion that Churchill is said to have made the declaration above noted. He returned in time for the coronation, and on May 14 was made an English peer, still as Baron Churchill, but of Sandridge. In a little more than a month he had an opportunity of doing service in return for these honours. As soon as the first confusion on the news of Monmouth's landing had subsided he was sent westwards with the Blues, and at Salisbury he was able to assemble a small force of infantry. While Feversham was collecting troops Churchill advanced as

far as Chard, where he received a summons from Monmouth to acknowledge him as king, and then hung on the flanks of the rebel army as it moved through Wells from Bridgwater to Bristol, and during the rest of the Duke's ill-advised and devious movements. When the small Royal army was at length got together, Churchill was nominally second in command. He had, however, the difficult duty of really commanding the force, while its nominal commander was not only incapable but jealous. Coxe gives him the credit of saving the Royal troops from surprise at Sedgmoor, but detailed accounts of the battle show that they were in fact surprised, though Monmouth's ill-luck, his imperfect knowledge of the ground, and the want of discipline of his troops, especially his cavalry, lost him the advantage so gained. It is agreed that Churchill practically commanded the troops, and as far as was necessary in a conflict between veteran regulars and country levies, won the battle. From any sort of guilt in the massacres which followed he is acknowledged to be free. Macaulay has told the story of Churchill's befriending Miss Hewling when she went to Court to beg her brother's life, and of his preparing her for the fruitlessness of her errand by the famous sentence, 'This marble [laying his hand on the chimneypiece of the ante-chamber] is not harder than the king.' Nor is he charged with having in any way shared in the ransoming and plundering which equally disgraced the triumph of the Royal cause, though this opportunity would have appealed to what is generally thought his weakest side. Indeed there seems very good reason for believing that in his refusal to change his faith, or even

to wink at assaults on it, is to be found the cause of the almost total absence of mention of his name from the summer of 1685 to the winter of 1688. That James had no further occasion for Churchill's military talents till the invasion of the Prince of Orange is no explanation, for, as has been seen, he had repeatedly employed him, and had had ample experience of his ability, in civil matters. Even the reward bestowed on him for the suppression of the rebellion (which, as far as it was the work of a general at all, was his), was very small, being only the colonelcy of another cavalry regiment. This was long before the time when, as Macaulay says (in one of those question-begging innuendoes of his, which are among the most immoral things in literature, for the very reason that there is nothing categorical in them which can be contradicted or exposed), 'men who had never had a scruple before began to become strangely scrupulous. Churchill whispered gently that the king was going too far.'

What is known of his history during this difficult period may be rapidly summarised. He was one of the 'Triers' in Delamere's case—a body of peers nominated by the Lord High Steward during the Parliamentary recess to take the place of the whole House of Lords—and as junior baron he gave what may be called the prerogative vote of Not Guilty. But no other public or quasi-public appearance is made by him until the famous budget of letters which Dykvelt carried back with him to the Hague in the summer of 1687, after he had been sounding the chief men of England on the Declaration of Indulgence and the other arbitrary acts of James. This letter is of sufficient importance to be given *in*

extenso.[1] It must, however, be remembered that at this time nothing like rebellion or revolution can be said to have been arranged, and that Dykvelt's negotiations, though looked on with natural dislike by the king, were notorious, and scarcely in any sense clandestine. When James was employed in his insane crusade against the laws of England and the statutes of Magdalen College, he made, as is known, a tour or progress, and at Winchester a remarkable conversation is reported between him and Churchill on the state of the public feeling and Churchill's own. It is evident that if this conversation and that with Galway are accepted as authentic, Churchill's attitude was not only consistent but expressed with a good deal of boldness.[2] Anne, moreover,

[1] '*May* 17, 1687. The Princess of Denmark having ordered me to discourse with Monsieur Dykvelt, and to let him know her resolutions, so that he might let your Highness and the princess her sister know that she was resolved by the assistance of God to suffer all extremities, even to death itself, rather than be brought to change her religion, I thought it my duty to your Highness and the Princess Royal by this opportunity of Monsieur Dykvelt to give you assurances under my own hand that my places and the king's favour I set at naught in comparison of being true to my religion. In all things but this the king may command me, and I call God to witness that even with joy I should expose my life for his service, so sensible am I of his favours. I know the troubling you, sir, with thus much of myself, I being of so little use to your Highness, is very impertinent. But I think it may be a great ease to your Highness and the princess to be satisfied that the Princess of Denmark is safe in trusting me; I being resolved, although I cannot live the life of a saint, if there be occasion for it, to show the resolution of a martyr.' This letter, which Macaulay summarises but does not quote in full, deserves, almost as much as the later one (given below), his famous description of 'the elevation of language which was a certain mark that he (Churchill) was going to commit a baseness.' This peculiarity has been observed of others.

[2] Coxe gives the conversation at considerable length (i. 20). As

who was not much given to thinking for herself, exercised that process sufficiently to be a very firm and decided member of the Church of England, and it is known that she rejected the wild proposal made to her that if she would turn Roman Catholic she might be made heiress to the exclusion of Mary. Lady Churchill was, as has been said, somewhat of an indifferent in religion. But here even she could only hope to direct, and not to thwart, the resolve of her husband and her friend. Moreover, the prospect, and then the actual birth, of a Prince of Wales, soon made it useless for Anne to be converted, even if she would have consented to be so. One of the stories of the time quoted by Macaulay shows that Churchill was not wont to hide his opinion. It is the speech of Sunderland to him, 'Oh silly! your troop of guards shall be called up to the House of Lords.' This jest could only have been made in answer, if not to a protest, at any rate to a prophecy of difficulties. As all know, James went from bad to worse, and in the days following the acquittal of the seven bishops the famous invitation was sent across by Herbert to William of Orange. In this Churchill had no part. But his patroness Anne was bitterly estranged from her father and stepmother by the mismanagement or ill-luck which sent her to Bath when the Prince of Wales was born. The impossibility of any member of the Church of England remaining much longer in favour with James, or indeed being able conscientiously to execute his orders, became more and more evident; and on August 4

it is expressly said that, save the two interlocutors, nobody was present, the reporter must have been Churchill himself, which, of course, to some extent lessens the value of the testimony.

Churchill despatched to William another letter, also important, which shall be discussed presently.[1] The history of the manner in which the actual desertion of James for William was effected by Lord and Lady Churchill is striking enough, and may be told briefly. It will not be complicated here by the gratuitous supposition of Macaulay that Churchill planned the defection of Cornbury, Clarendon's eldest son and Anne's first cousin, which preceded his own by some days. He has quite enough to answer for without being accused of offences which there is no evidence to fix on him. All that can be said is, that Anne did not disapprove of her cousin's proceeding, and, according to her uncle Clarendon, remarked that 'she believed many of the army would do the same.' Zealous loyalist as Clarendon was at this time, he does not seem to have thought it necessary to tell the king this, though James was not obtuse enough wholly to misunderstand the warning which the desertion itself plainly gave as to the conduct of the husband of Anne's closest friend.

Before setting out for the west, James called a council of officers, among whom was Churchill, just created lieutenant-general. The king, according to his own account, which is not confirmed, gave all present leave to throw up their commissions if they had scruples about serving him, and Churchill was the first to vow

[1] 'Mr. Sidney will let you know how I intend to behave myself: I think it is what I owe to God and my country. My honour I take leave to put into your Highness's hands, in which I think it safe. If you think there is anything else that I ought to do, you have but to command me; I shall pay an entire obedience to it, being resolved to die in that religion that it has pleased God to give you both the will and power to protect.'

fidelity to the death. After this James refused the petition of Halifax for a free parliament, and set out for Salisbury, which he reached on November 19. On the 24th a council of war was held, and Churchill argued against a retreat. He had previously advised the king to visit the outposts at Warminster, and James seems to have afterwards imagined that this advice implied the extremity of treason—a design to make away with him or deliver him into the enemy's hands. Of this there is no proof whatever, and it is intrinsically improbable. But Churchill, after the king determined on retreat, and probably after some private intelligence that his designs were blown upon, thought it unsafe to wait longer. During the night he fled, accompanied by the Duke of Grafton, one of Charles's bastards, to William, leaving a letter, which is another important document in the case.[1]

[1] 'Since men are seldom suspected of sincerity [insincerity?] when they act contrary to their interests; and though dutiful behaviour to your Majesty in the worst of times (for which I acknowledge my poor services much overpaid) may not be sufficient to incline you to a charitable interpretation of my actions; yet I hope the great advantage which I enjoy under your Majesty, which I can never expect in any other change of government, may reasonably convince your Majesty and the world that I am actuated by a higher principle when I offer that violence to my inclination and interest as to desert your Majesty at a time when your affairs seem to challenge the strictest obedience from all your subjects, much more from one who lies under the greatest obligations to your Majesty. This, sir, could proceed from nothing but the inviolable dictates of my conscience, and a necessary concern for my religion which no good man can oppose, and with which, I am instructed, nothing can come in competition. Heaven knows with what partiality my dutiful opinion of your Majesty has hitherto represented those unhappy designs, which inconsiderate and self-interested men have framed against your Majesty's true interest and the Protestant religion; but as I can no longer join with such to give a pretence by conquest

Lady Churchill played her part with equal success. Anne had already signified to William her approval of his enterprise, but she took no overt step till, on the Sunday, news of Churchill's flight reached London. A kind of informal captivity was thereupon imposed by the queen on the princess, and that night she and Lady Churchill escaped in *deshabille* from Whitehall, were received in a hackney-coach by Compton, Bishop of London and by Dorset, spent the evening at the bishop's palace, journeyed thence to Dorset's hunting seat near Epping, and then fled to Nottingham, Compton leading the escort in buff coat and boots, or, as others say (but perhaps this was a little later), 'in a purple uniform coat and orange breeches.'

Little more actual fact belongs to this part of the story as it concerns the Churchills. But Macaulay is justified in dwelling on the refusal of James, almost at the last moment (when it might have been barely possible for him to save himself if he had complied with Halifax and the other peers who remained faithful), to proclaim a general amnesty. He specified Churchill as one whom it was impossible to pardon. It was extremely natural, but it was intensely unwise and fully of a piece with the incredible imprudence which some years afterwards dictated the too famous Proclamation of Indemnity-with-exceptions from Versailles. Meanwhile Churchill undertook no military operations against his countrymen or his old master, but, on the

to bring them to effect, so I will always, with the hazard of my life and fortune (so much your Majesty's due) endeavour to preserve your royal person and lawful rights with all the tender concern and dutiful respect,' &c. &c.

contrary, performed the great service of bringing to order and discipline the greater part of the army which Feversham had let loose upon the country on receiving the news of James's first flight. Lord Churchill voted for the regency in the debates as to James's abdication, and finally did not vote at all on the offer of the crown to William and Mary.

We now come to the first of not a few occasions on which it is necessary to discuss patiently and at some length the ethical problems presented by Marlborough's life. If such discussion is dull or uninteresting to any reader, for that reader Marlborough's biography can have no special attraction. Its interest at best must for him be concentrated in the events—a thousand times recounted—of his period of military glory, with the possible addition of the opportunity which his other actions, as commonly interpreted, give for the common and cheap antitheses about glory and shame, greatest and meanest of mankind, and the like. For such I do not write, and nobody need write, a new life of John Churchill.

Among the views which may possibly be taken of the facts just related, there are at least two views which most emphatically may not be taken by anyone whose object is truth, and whose view-point is that furnished by a tolerably observant acquaintance with history and human nature. When the excellent Coxe says that 'in revolutions it is common to find the most upright characters maligned and the purest principles misrepresented: from this fate Lord Churchill did not escape,' he is speaking directly of the absurd charge against Churchill of a design on the king's person.

But he necessarily implies that his hero's character was of the most upright and his principles the purest, and it is by no means clear that the remark is not meant to apply to the whole of Churchill's conduct at the time. This, of course, is simple nonsense. The most favourable view which is possible for reasonable beings who choose to take the facts into consideration will leave Marlborough's character and his principles at more than one time of his life very far from upright or pure. At this particular juncture there were, no doubt, various courses for a perfectly upright and pure character to pursue. But there was at least one course which such a man would not have pursued. He would not have continued in James's service years after the king had undertaken a deliberate crusade against those things which he (Churchill) held dearest in church and state; he would not have commanded the king's troops and shared the king's councils months after he had definitely pledged himself to obey in every respect the commands of one whom he knew to be plotting an armed attack on the king; he would not have gone to Salisbury as the king's lieutenant-general, ostensibly to attack this very person to whom he had unreservedly pledged himself months before. The charges against him of elaborate seduction, of Judas-behaviour at the council after Cornbury's defection, and the like, rest on the dubious if not worthless evidence of the garbled memoirs of James, Macaulay's defence of which is sufficient to damn them. But the open, notorious, undisputed facts are incompatible with talk about most upright characters and purest principles. Characters and principles deserving these epi-

thets were not common among either Jacobites or Williamites. All the adherents of the Prince of Orange were tainted not merely with formal treason, but in most cases with actual and indisputable treachery. Even Nottingham, even Sancroft, on the other side, might have had some little difficulty in challenging Coxe's epithets. But Churchill?—the thing is absurd. Excuses more or less valid may be found for a man who plots secretly for months against his king, and with a show of unbroken fidelity intrigues for months to the disadvantage of his benefactor. But if we wish to escape sheer absurdity we must leave such words as 'purest and most upright' out of the dictionary of the incident.

I do not, however, know that the passages which have been and will be quoted in reference to the matter from Marlborough's most eloquent detractor of late days show a mood of mind much more philosophical, or an estimation of evidence much more judicial and accurate, than Dr. Coxe's. 'Marlborough's life' is to Macaulay 'a prodigy of turpitude.' There was 'no guilt and no disgrace which he was not ready to incur.' 'Infamy,' 'villainy,' 'guilt,' 'dishonour' rain from the fertile pen, and we are told that William must have read Churchill's letters 'with a cynical smile.' Perhaps; but it does not appear that a cynical smile at Churchill's plotting against his master sat very happily on the face of a man who was plotting against his uncle, father-in-law, ally, and friend. This little oversight, however, is almost inevitable when men get into the altitudes implied by such phrases as those just quoted. It is closely connected with another much wider and more important oversight of the same kind which is common

to Macaulay and to all who, from the Whig side, heap terms of execration upon Marlborough. I cannot, myself, see how it is possible that, if these terms are allowed, the splash of them should not very considerably sully all the actors in the Revolution drama, from its glorious and immortal leader downwards. All these actors, except the few exiles or outlaws, who may be supposed to have had open war declared against them, and to be entitled to declare open war in turn, are tarred with the brush not merely, as said above, of formal treason but of positive treachery. Their guilt differs merely in degree from Churchill's, and in some cases (I am not speaking of men like Sunderland) it approaches very near to it. Bishop Compton, a signatory of the famous invitation, equivocated and dissembled as long as Churchill, and finished by striking, almost at the same moment, a blow nearly as damaging and even more cruel. He had, moreover, asserted the duty of absolute non-resistance as Churchill never had done; as, if all tales are true, he had expressly refused to do. Danby's action is universally ascribed to desire of power and place; Russell and Sidney had, like Churchill, been James's servants, and are said (still by their defenders) to have acted in revenge of private wrongs; Lumley was afraid of James's displeasure because he had left the Roman for the Anglican communion; Devonshire had 30,000*l.* to gain by driving James from the throne; Shrewsbury had been turned out of his appointments and had a grudge against the Government. These things are not taken from Jacobite libels, but from the Williamiad of Lord Macaulay. Of course, if all these persons were animated by a sincere belief that nothing

but the armed advent of the Prince of Orange could save the religion, the constitution and the general well-being of their country, they were, on any but absolute non-resistance principles, more than justified; and whatever private motives they may have had, whatever dubious means they may have resorted to, fall out of sight. But the excuse which is good for them is equally good for the fact, if not for the manner, of Churchill's desertion. No moralist will contend that a man should put private benefits before his country's welfare and his religious duties. That Churchill sighed as a servant, but acted as a patriot and a churchman, is, from this particular point of view (the point of view which sees nothing but the inestimable blessings of the Revolution), all the more to his credit. I take this view myself as little as I take Archdeacon Coxe's; but those who do take it seem to be as mistaken as he is, and, what is more, to be inconsistently mistaken.

Again, the accusation that Marlborough acted from mere self-interest—an accusation which Sarah herself formulated long afterwards very obligingly for her husband's enemies in the words, 'it was evident to all the world that, as things were carried on by King James, everybody sooner or later must be ruined who would not become a Roman Catholic'—is an awkward one in two ways; for it obliges those who adopt it to admit that this perjured, infamous villain, who cared for nothing but self-interest, did care for one thing much more, and that was his religion. And it has to be set against Marlborough's equally bold and adroit putting of the other side against this view. He, as it has been seen, declared that he was acting against his interest; and,

though nobody will accept this unconditionally, it is an arguable view. If he had received no very great countenance from James recently, he had received no marks of displeasure. It was certain that military men would be more and more in request as the king leant more and more on a standing army. The advantage of keeping a few Anglicans in favour might be thought likely to commend itself even to James; and Churchill's duties, being purely executive, were not likely to bring him into a position of inextricable difficulty. On the other hand, Anne, when James was once out of the way, was an insecure and a distant source of profit. As events proved, Marlborough had to wait nearly fifteen years before deriving much benefit from his desertion of the king. If Mary had lived to the ordinary term he would have been dead before her, and if she had had children he was nowhere. That William personally should favour him was very unlikely. In other words, he was throwing away almost a certainty for a remote and weak possibility. I do not think that this argument proves his character to be the most upright and his principles to be the purest, but I say that, from the point of view of those who argue that self-interest was his only or chief motive, it is a very powerful argument.

Having thus put aside some inadmissible views of the situation, let us try if we cannot take an admissible one. In order to do this it is necessary, of course, to lay down certain postulates. We cannot, in arguing on human conduct, argue as we should argue on the relations of x and y. We must begin by excluding, or at least by regarding with the utmost distrust, all superlatives. In the intellectual sphere, or in those spheres

which correspond to the intellectual, superlatives and the wide distinctions of colour which they indicate are indeed in place. Between Newton or Bentley and the man who can just struggle through a Cambridge poll degree the difference may not improperly be expressed in the terms which another illustrious fellow of Trinity was so fond of employing. So it is between Shakespeare and Kirke White, between Raphael and the average contributor to the Dudley Gallery, between Marlborough and Braddock, between Pitt or Burke and the favourite candidates of contemporary caucuses on both sides. But the differences of conduct are not to be expressed in this crude fashion. It may be very much doubted whether there are any unmitigated villains or impeccable angels. It is quite certain that, when we find a man possessing some undoubted virtues, we had better pause a long time before charging him with other unredeemed vices. The ordinary whitewashing of the villains of history fails not so much because it denies their unrelieved blackness as because it tries to make them spotlessly white. Every now and then, it may be, one comes across a character which seems to have no redeeming features—a character which has neither love, nor heroism, nor decency of conduct, nor splendour of exploits. No one pretends that Marlborough was among these. It is at least worth while to inquire whether there is any more ground for thinking that he was among those whose supposed glaring contrasts of character amuse the minds of children and point the morals of fools.

The chief instrument for inquiring into the character of celebrated persons is one which those who like to

take extreme views, seeing its efficiency, have agreed to cry down as an unfair instrument. It is useless, we are often told, to urge that every man must be judged by the moral standard of his time. There is no reply to this, except that in this case there is no use in attempting to judge a man at all. In contradiction to some critics, it must always be maintained by every capable student of history that, before using ethical differences about a man, we must not only discover the moral standard of his time, but we must discover his own special attitude towards that moral standard. To establish this there is no need to enter into casuistical arguments. Every time furnishes instances which are more convincing as to the impossibility of sweeping judgments in morality than folios of controversy.

In reference to Marlborough, again, there is one consideration which needs special attention. A man who urged at the present day a fear for the Church of England as a justification for such acts as Marlborough committed just before the Revolution would probably be a hypocrite, except that no one with the brains to be a hypocrite would now urge this. With the abolition of the identification of orthodoxy, real or feigned, and political or worldly prosperity, the temptation to such an act and the explanation of it have simultaneously vanished. Tests nowadays are regarded as immoral things, and (by a *revirement* of morality which, perhaps, leaves those who avail themselves of it little room to gird at Churchill) holders even of church preferments are regarded as doing something rather creditable when they use rectories, deaneries, headships of colleges, as places of vantage whence to apply leverage for the

overthrow of Christianity and the Church. In Marlborough's time it was different, and Marlborough's bitterest reviler has, as we have seen, admitted, partly because he could not help it and partly because it pointed an antithesis, that Marlborough was not less unwilling, if he was not more unwilling, to give up his religion than to give up his places. But, morality being necessary to man, we have tightened as well as relaxed, and the tightening as well as the relaxing has been adverse to Marlborough. We doubt, or do not doubt, whether his pretended attachment to the Protestant religion was an hypocrisy; we are quite sure that he could not have plotted against James, have caballed against William, have cheated the revenue and his soldiers, have negotiated with the Chevalier, if he had not been a villain. Here we make exactly the same mistake. A man who to-day did what Marlborough did (the argument is Macaulay's own, though he took good care only to apply it when it suited), what not only Marlborough, but such plain, straightforward men as Cornbury, Grafton, and Ormond did in November 1688, would probably be an abandoned scoundrel. So would one who did what not only Marlborough, but Shrewsbury and Russell did during William's reign. So would one who did what scores, hundreds, thousands of British officers in civil and military positions of trust did in regard to public money up to times within the memory of men living. And it may be added that probably no single man who would do these deeds to-day would hesitate, as Marlborough hesitated, to change his religion, while hundreds of men would call themselves Roman Catholics or anything else, if fashion or interest bid them do so.

It is idle to call these truisms. Perhaps they are, but they are also truths, and until they are recognised as truths there is no hope of judging such a character as Marlborough's.

When they are recognised there is some such hope. We take Marlborough as we find him, and the ideas of the time as we find them. We see a man with a definite and strong religious faith bound up with fidelity to a certain form of church doctrine and government; with, in all probability, a less definite but still strong attachment to the English constitution, construed not Whiggishly, but as moderate Cavaliers like Hyde construed it; with a brain of extraordinary subtlety and power of combination and foresight; with an accidental but strong hold on one probable source of worldly prosperity; and with an intense resolve to prosper. He finds himself attached to a king who is deliberately violating some of his cherished convictions in politics and religion. He sees that this course of conduct, though it has not hitherto touched himself, threatens the worldly prosperity of everyone who, holding such convictions, refuses to abandon them; and that the king's tenure of power is, owing to that course of conduct, becoming every day more problematical. The whole tenor of the man's own life and thoughts, the main if not the whole practice of the age in which he lives, cause him to regard these things as conditions of a game which he has to play so as to win, or at any rate save it. The celebrated addition to the celebrated adage that 'All is fair in love, war, *and politics*,' exactly expresses his state of mind. We still admit that nearly everything is fair in war, and that a great deal is fair in love. In regard to

politics, I am not sure that our practice has changed so much as our theory. Marlborough, at any rate, obviously held that considerations of nice private honour did not enter into the political game. The often-quoted words about putting his honour in the prince's hands show this clearly; for a man who puts his honour in somebody else's hands practically leaves it out of the question. For this, and for all that it implies, Marlborough can receive no admiration: he may receive a great deal of disapproval in that he went farther in this purely 'playing to win' view of the political game than the best men in his own age approved. But there must always be for his action the excuse that it was not a deliberate defiance of laws which the actor recognised. The defence is not a very strong one even when it covers, and it will not cover at all some acts of Marlborough's that we shall have to discuss hereafter, but it has a certain value.

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER WILLIAM OF ORANGE.

WHOSOEVER wishes to understand the conduct of any prominent Englishman during the reign of William and Mary, it is before all things necessary that he should recognise the singular topsyturviness (if a colloquialism may be permitted where dignified English refuses an equivalent) of the political situation. Nothing like it has ever occurred since in England; nothing quite like it has occurred during the numerous revolutions of continental countries. It is customary for admirers of what used to be called Revolution Principles (the term has recently acquired a far different meaning) to extol the dignity and decency of the proceedings which turned out James II. They are quite justified in a sense, but that very sense explains, though it does not excuse or justify, the extraordinary tergiversations and vacillations which for many years distinguished both national feeling and private conduct. The Convention parliament, no doubt, observed all constitutional forms that were in its power with anxious care, and based its arguments on precedent with elaborate decency. But the merest child in constitutional lore could not but perceive that it had no constitutional standing whatever. That its constituencies were the

constituencies recognised by the law mattered absolutely nothing, for they were not legally summoned to exercise their functions; there was no authority to sanction or verify their powers; and their acts, when completed, lacked the assent even of a king *de facto* until they had themselves made that king. The tie, therefore, that bound post-revolution to præ-revolution constitutionalities was a tie of unexceptionable character save in two points; there was, unfortunately, a breach of continuity at both ends of it.

But if matters were so unsatisfactory for the mere formalist, they were not much better for the advanced Whig, who thought forms forms only, and accepted to the full the doctrine of the inherent and inextinguishable sovereignty of the people. It was perfectly well known, and has been admitted by historians of the most unquestioned fidelity to the Revolution settlement, that as soon as the immediate pressure of James's tyranny (all the more galling because it was a tyranny of worry rather than a tyranny of positive persecution) was removed, a majority—probably a very large majority—of the English nation preferred their ancient kings, and continued to prefer them for many years. The two forces which kept the settlement settled were the personal indispensableness of William and the personal unacceptableness of James. The force which had first established it was undoubtedly, however indiscreet it may have been in Burnet to say so publicly, conquest and nothing but conquest. William's 'Swiss, Swedes, and Brandenburgers' in the first place, and in England; the failure of Dundee's incompetent lieutenants to avail themselves of Killiecrankie in Scotland; Newton Butler, London-

derry, and the Boyne in Ireland, were the real title-deeds which William and Mary had to show, and this kind of title-deed Englishmen have never been very well content to recognise. Yet, again, the easy-going person who cared nothing about legitimacy or the constitutional status of the Convention, who very willingly blinded his eyes to the Orange Conquest and did not trouble himself much about the relative majority of Jacobites and Williamites in the country, could not disguise from himself that the settlement was in the highest degree insecure. He had, if he was a man fairly advanced in life, seen half-a-dozen different governments in England—governments different in origin, in form, in everything except a certain similarity of the journey-work of administration. He could have no security that he should not see yet another change—that the *rex de facto* might not become the *exul de facto*, and *vice versâ*. To put the thing in a nutshell, an enormous majority of Englishmen would have infinitely preferred James if he would have made himself in any way tolerable, and only tolerated William because they could not do without him. With such a state of feeling extending from the highest to the lowest; with an exciting and mainly unfavourable course of foreign and domestic affairs, and most of all with the lax political traditions which half a century of revolution inevitably brings about; with the exiled king plentifully supplied with money and the king *de facto* frequently in straits for it; with James a countryman and William a foreigner; with James far enough off for his personal shortcomings to be forgotten and with William's disagreeable personality constantly on the spot—all things may be said

to have been prepared for a very ugly spectacle of political misconduct. The spectacle was duly presented, and before discussing Marlborough's part in it, it will be best, as before, to recite impartially what the facts of that conduct were.

It has been said that Marlborough [1] was not very prominent in the proceedings which immediately followed the Revolution; indeed, a less keen intelligence than his would have perceived the desirableness of taking no forward part in merely civil politics; and it must be regarded as a mistake on his part that he not only voted but spoke for the abortive Abjuration Bill of May 1690. He had in the preceding year done much less questionable service in his proper profession. During the first campaign of the renewed war against France he commanded an English brigade under the Prince of Waldeck in Flanders, and was chiefly concerned in the sharp skirmish or battle of Walcourt on August 5, 1689. The French attacked his outposts and were repulsed with heavy relative loss in men and guns. Hero Marlborough displayed the mixture of caution and

[1] He is now properly so called, having been created Earl of Marlborough two days before the coronation of William and Mary. He had already been made a Privy Councillor and Lord of the Bedchamber. Domestic details as to Marlborough and his family are at no time very plentiful. He still resided at Holywell for the most part, and when in town, apparently with his wife, in Anne's apartments at the Palace. Besides Henrietta already mentioned, he had two sons—John, afterwards Marquess of Blandford, who died when a boy; Charles, who died still younger; and three daughters—Anne, the ancestress of the present lines of Marlborough and Spencer; Elizabeth, who married the first Duke of Bridgwater; and Mary, who married the Duke of Montagu. All these were born before the death of William. Anne and Elizabeth died before their father.

boldness (the latter predominating) in which even among great generals he was distinguished, meeting Humières' advance with a flank attack as well as with a stubborn resistance in front. William observed, in a letter to him : 'It is to you that this advantage is principally owing;' and considering that Marlborough held but a brigade command, the praise is, especially for that age of etiquette, very high. Coxe has expressed his surprise that Marlborough was not after this employed either in the continental campaign of the next year or (at first) in Ireland, and has explained the latter circumstance by a quite unnecessary surmise of chivalrous unwillingness on Marlborough's part to serve against his old master. The archdeacon, however, made the difficulty for himself by not observing the chronology of a very different affair, in which Lady Marlborough directly, and her husband indirectly, were engaged. This was the question of the Princess Anne's establishment, which was vexed during the whole of the year 1689, and only settled at its close, the settlement, moreover, being very disagreeable to the feelings of William and Mary. It is not improbable that Marlborough's support of the Abjuration Bill was an attempt to recover William's favour; but if so, it was a maladroit one.

Anne's settled income in her father's time was 30,000*l.* a year, but after his abdication or expulsion she stood next in order of succession to the reigning sovereigns, and it was not perhaps unreasonable to expect a certain augmentation. The exact course of the family quarrel between Anne and her sister and brother-in-law is very differently related, and probably,

like all family quarrels, lent itself very well to such difference of relation. The partisans of Anne say that William grudged her even the 30,000*l.*, strongly opposed any increase, and was only forced to consent to the final arrangement under which she received 50,000*l.*, with a parliamentary guarantee, by the friendly exertions of the Marlboroughs and her other supporters. The partisans of William say that the thing was sprung upon him and upon Mary, that a parliamentary intrigue was started before he had even the chance of gratifying or of knowing his sister-in-law's desires, and that he was only hurt at the notion of his generosity or his good faith being doubted. It is certain that the affair caused great heartburning between the sisters, and between the king and queen and the Churchills. Anne rewarded Lady Marlborough's exertions with a pension of 1,000*l.* a year, which Sarah represents herself as refusing, and as only being persuaded to accept with the utmost difficulty. Macaulay says that Marlborough himself was unaffected in William's estimation by this transaction; but that may be very much doubted. However this may have been, Marlborough was not, as has been said, employed on the Continent in 1690, nor did he serve in the Boyne campaign. But he was one of the Council of Nine left to assist Mary in King William's absence, and during the autumn of the year he was first the proposer and then the executor of a very important military diversion. The scares and disgraces of Beachy Head and Teignmouth had not only produced no serious harm but had called forth a great deal of patriotic and anti-Gallican feeling. Marlborough, in his place in council, suggested

the despatch of an English fleet with 5,000 men to reduce the great seaports of the south of Ireland, which were in French hands, and formed the channel of communication with France. The council, except Nottingham, opposed this, and perhaps excusably, for it might well seem to a less bold and commanding intelligence than Marlborough's, that to denude the kingdom of more ships and troops when its shores had just been menaced, and actually ravaged with impunity, was rash. But William, when consulted, at once approved the plan, and Marlborough himself executed it. He was not long in making his arrangements. and set sail from Portsmouth exactly as William reached England, his exploit at the Boyne a little tarnished by his ill-success at Limerick. Marlborough's campaign, on the other hand, was, though short, a model one. It was the first occasion on which he had an entirely independent command, and even this was challenged by the Duke of Wurtemberg, who commanded a detachment of William's army at Cork. The Duke claimed precedence, and Marlborough not only consented to a partition of command day and day about (an ostensibly dangerous experiment), but propitiated his vain and punctilious colleague or subordinate by giving 'Wurtemberg' as the word of command. Cork was taken in two days after a sharp cannonade, the carrying of several outworks by storm, and the passage of a marsh, which was thought the safeguard of the city, by the English troops. Here Grafton, Marlborough's comrade in the Monmouth campaign, in the ride from Salisbury, and as a volunteer in this expedition, fell ill. The town capitulated and was treated with lenity, though Marlborough could not

at once establish complete order. From Cork he marched, without losing a moment, to Kinsale, surrounded it, extinguished the flames which the garrison had kindled in the town, carried the Old Fort, as one of the two citadels was called, by escalade, and laid siege in form to the other, the New Fort. This soon capitulated, the garrison being allowed to retire to Limerick; and Kinsale, the chief port of communication with France, and full of stores, was in the hands of the English. Marlborough was back in London after little more than a month's absence, having achieved what deserves to be called a pattern campaign in little. William's acknowledgment was handsome but characteristically qualified: 'No one,' he said, '*who had seen so little service as Marlborough* was so fit for command.' The general thus eulogised returned to Ireland and held the chief command there during the winter of 1690–91, but he engaged in no active military operations. Indeed, this brief and brilliant performance was, except the campaign of Walcourt, the only active military operation in which he was engaged during the reign.

It cannot be said that William was to blame for this non-employment of the most brilliant soldier among his English subjects, as he was already known to be; of the greatest soldier in Europe, as he was before very long to prove himself. Indeed, Marlborough accompanied William to the Continent during the campaign of 1691, performed some routine military duties, and attracted a remarkable compliment from the Prince of Vaudemont, William's cousin and a Dutch general of high standing and ability. Among the English leaders, he said, Kirke, Lanier, Mackay, Talmash had various good qualities, but

in Marlborough there was 'something inexpressible,' and he could not fail to do great actions. William is said to have acquiesced; indeed, though he himself was a constantly unfortunate general, his military talents made it impossible that he should not recognise Marlborough's extraordinary qualities, for many as were William's faults, jealousy of genius was not one of them. It is probable that, had he known what Marlborough was doing in secret, he would have less willingly assented to Vaudemont's eulogy.

Communication with James on the part of leading Englishmen who had taken a share in the Revolution began almost immediately after it. Shrewsbury, a Whig, and one of the Seven, had entered into such communication not much more than a year after James had fled, and others followed. But the most important movements took place in 1691. Russell, also one of the Seven, a prominent Whig, and one who had been gorged with plunder by the Revolution Government, took the bait offered by Jacobite emissaries. So did Godolphin, whose motto indeed was that of the Marquis of Winchester of the preceding century (not the hero of Basing), 'Willow not oak.' These men were approached and consented. Marlborough volunteered. Macaulay has, in his usual picturesque fashion, and with less than his usual unfairness, told the story of Marlborough's overtures through Colonel Edward Sackville. There certainly seems to have been nothing wanting to at least the self-abasement of Marlborough's apology. Nor did he fail to give pledges of sincerity. He sent James the plan of the campaign and the state of the English troops, he warned Jacobites of intended warrants, he

proposed or at least hinted at a purpose to bring over the army bodily. Finally, he got from James, the implacable James, an autograph promise of pardon. It is the greatest possible tribute to Marlborough's almost superhuman abilities that, though immediately after these transactions he was in a position, as above related, to fulfil, or try to fulfil, his part in them, he evaded the pledge of desertion by a transparent excuse, and was not cast out of James's good graces. But he did something almost as great as the bringing over of the English army: he procured from Anne a written submission to her father; in other words, a resignation of her claims as next heir to William and Mary, who, all things considered, were not likely to be succeeded by heirs of their body.

If a passage of James's memoirs is not an audacious forgery or a complete mistake, it must be admitted that Macaulay has given the true account of the manner in which Marlborough proposed to carry out his promises. But, with characteristic love of overcharging his case, he has attributed to Marlborough the very motive and purpose of which James, in the same passage, acquits him, and for which there is no evidence except James's acquittal. What is certain is, that on January 10, 1692, Marlborough was dismissed from all his offices. Nobody quite knew the cause, and the best-informed persons told the most contradictory stories. James's version is that Marlborough had devised an address of parliament to William to dismiss all foreigners from the civil and military service of the Crown, an address which certainly expressed the known temper of the nation. If William agreed, he became helpless; if he refused, an open breach

would take place between him and Parliament; the army was to declare for the latter and James was to come in. Much progress had been made in the design when, says James, 'some indiscreet though faithful subjects of mine, thinking to serve me, and imagining that Lord Churchill was acting not for me but for the Princess of Denmark, discovered the whole to Bentinck,' who, it may be added, was Marlborough's personal enemy, and had been described by him with very great truth as 'a wooden fellow.' Macaulay accepts the plot, and he also accepts the intention to utilise it for Anne's exaltation. This, in the first place, is an offence against the law of evidence (for if James is to be believed in the one case he is to be believed in the other); and, in the second place, it overlooks the fact that Anne had already made her written submission to her father. It is possible to exaggerate Anne's stupidity, it is not possible to exaggerate her conscientiousness.

Marlborough, however, was simply dismissed, the character of the information against him not comporting with legal proceedings, even if William had not well known the danger of such. In what followed, however, even the faithful Macaulay cannot acquit the king and queen of injudicious action. It was, of course, within William's power to dismiss his servants without cause assigned, and if the facts are as stated by James, nobody can very much blame him for cashiering Marlborough. But when, either of her own notion or at his bidding, Mary proceeded to insist that Anne should dismiss Lady Marlborough, and on her refusal sent a message by the Lord Chamberlain ordering Lady Marlborough to quit the palace, she not only behaved rudely, and in an un-

sisterly fashion, but made a gross blunder. Anne immediately quitted the palace and established herself at Berkeley House. Minor insults were, it is said, put upon her by order of the Court, and whether this was so or not it is clear that the mistake both justified and embittered the Princess's party more than any exercise of Marlborough's celebrated talents for intriguing could have done.

The mistakes of his enemies were destined in more ways than one to serve him. Hardly had public opinion been inclined towards him by his apparently causeless dismissal, and by the rudeness of the queen towards his patroness, than Fuller's false plot brought odium on the anti-Jacobites. Fuller's plot was followed in a month or two by Young's, in which Marlborough's extraordinary good luck brought it about that he was falsely accused, and with Sprat, Bishop of Rochester, bore the brunt of a plot differing not very much from the very designs of which, though it was not publicly known, he was certainly guilty. Young, a man of the worst character, but a clever forger, devised an association for seizing the Prince of Orange dead or alive. This association was signed, or rather purported to be so, by Sprat, Marlborough, Cornbury, Sancroft, and Salisbury, the last a Roman Catholic, and one who might be thought to resent some very rough treatment by the Whigs shortly after the Revolution. On the information given, Marlborough was arrested and sent to the Tower, but the clumsy management of the plot by Young's confederate, and the cool and successful defence of Sprat, soon showed its utter falsity, and Marlborough was set at liberty. It was impossible that in public

estimation this affair should not be connected with his disgrace, and the certainty that he had been unjustly accused in the one instance made it seem not improbable that he had been unjustly treated in the other.

This was in April, 1692, and for the rest of the year we hear little of Marlborough, except that in August he was beset by highwaymen between London and St. Albans, and robbed of five hundred guineas, which, there is no doubt, annoyed him very much. He had, on June 23, been struck out of the Privy Council with Halifax and Shrewsbury, and (by a very arbitrary stretch of power, which in James would have met with the severest reprobation) his recognisances and those of his sureties in the Young matter were refused to be discharged for months after the discovery of the falsity of Young's accusation. The whole matter formed the subject of more than one debate, and the House of Lords passed a declaration against similar arrests in future. But the resentment of William, which, indeed, the information given to Bentinck justified only too well, continued unabated for some time, perhaps till after the death of Mary, at the end of 1694. During the interval Marlborough had unfortunately continued to deserve fully the remark which William is said to have made to Shrewsbury on one occasion, when the disgraced general offered his services through that channel: 'I do not think,' he said, 'that it would be for the good of my service to entrust the command of my troops to Lord Marlborough.' At this very time, indeed, though William did not know it, Marlborough had been guilty of the basest act of his whole career—of an act for which it is difficult to forgive him, even after the

largest allowances are made for the considerations set forth at the beginning of this chapter and the end of the last. This act was the betraying to James—that is to say, to France—of the expedition to Brest under Talmash.[1] That Talmash himself was Marlborough's nearest rival in military talent has been used as an aggravation of his guilt. But, that guilt needs no aggravation. It was shared by others; but that does not help it out; and it must be admitted that even the shield which has on it the names of Blenheim and Ramillies is indelibly disgraced by another name, which is also written there—the name of Camaret Bay.

The history of this crime, which Coxe, though disapproving of it, dismisses with characteristic euphemism as one of the various expedients resorted to by Marlborough and others to 'regain the goodwill of their former sovereign, that their demerits might be overlooked in the event of a restoration,' is as follows: In the spring of 1694 the French plan of campaign included an extensive series of naval operations in the Mediterranean, and the greater part of the French fleet was sent from Brest southward through the straits, to act against Barcelona and the Catalonian coast. The English fleet was to follow, and at the same time it was resolved that a squadron, with a large body of troops on board, under Talmash, should meanwhile attack

[1] This usual spelling of the name of a brave and very unfortunate leader perhaps disguises from some readers the fact that he was of the family of the Tollemaches of Helmingham in Suffolk and Peckforton in Cheshire—a family, despite their French-looking name, among the oldest in England, and most worthily represented at the present day.

Brest, which was left comparatively defenceless. But the immediate destination of this force was kept a secret, and for the success of its undertaking it was absolutely necessary that it should remain one. Marlborough was at this time in disgrace, and had no official information, but he had abundant access to sources of such information, and, discovering the plan, he wrote straight to James to warn him of it, with exact details of the force to be employed, its destination and its purpose. The result is only too well known. Orders were sent from Paris to put Brest into a complete state of defence. Vauban himself carried them out, and large bodies of troops were mustered to man the new works. Adverse winds delayed the English fleet, and when it at last arrived, under Berkeley as admiral and Talmash as general, the French preparations were complete. The leaders, it must be confessed, did their best to complete Marlborough's treachery by their own misconduct. They ignored the result of a perilous reconnaissance made by the young Marquis of Carmarthen (Danby's son) in his yacht; they persevered in attacking, despite the clearest evidence that the enemy were forewarned and fully prepared; they landed men in open boats under the fire of batteries which the ships had not silenced and were not able to silence; and they had to retreat from the shore of Camaret Bay, where the spot is still called 'Mort Anglaise,' with the loss of more than a thousand men, including Talmash, who was mortally wounded. An enterprise conducted with such rashness might in any case not have succeeded, but it was Marlborough's work that it was foredoomed to failure. His guilt will

scarcely be thought to be much diminished by the fact that Godolphin shared it.

He had done other ill services to William, some of which, however, could hardly be called more than fair party blows openly dealt. In the summer of 1692 he had prevailed on the Lords to address William, praying that all English generals should rank as senior to generals in the Dutch service, whatever the age and rank of the latter. He formally protested against the throwing out of the Place Bill in the next session. He supported against the Government the Bill for the regulation of trials in cases of high treason, and in fact he was an active and prominent member of what may almost be called the regular Opposition. His irregular opposition also continued, and was, if anything, stimulated by James's appointment, as his Secretary of State, of the Earl of Middleton, the most popular of the extreme Jacobites, the friend of Dryden and Etherege, and one of the last politicians of his generation who combined the jovial good humour and keen wit which had distinguished Charles II. with industry, ability, and a respectable if not quite unblemished character. Yet immediately after the disaster of Camaret, as has been said, Marlborough offered his services to William.

For the restoration to favour which followed Mary's death there were in all probability several reasons. Sunderland, who was closely connected with the Marlboroughs, had now acquired great influence over William. The king never seems to have felt the same personal dislike to Marlborough that his wife had felt to Marlborough's wife. It was both indecent and inconvenient

that he should continue an open quarrel with the next heir to the throne, and a reconciliation with Anne meant a reconciliation with the Churchills. This reconciliation was not at first very cordial, nor was Marlborough immediately restored to office; but he ceased from 1694 to be openly in opposition.

That nearly all the most untoward circumstances of his life turned to Marlborough's advantage may be attributed to luck, or to good management, or to both, according to the taste and fancy of the judge. The fact is remarkable, and it was never more conspicuously illustrated than in the result of the Assassination plot, or rather of that aftergust of the plot which blew off the head of Sir John Fenwick. With the Assassination plot itself no one has ever asserted or insinuated that Marlborough was concerned, and it is therefore unnecessary to give an account of it. His best friends and his worst enemies agree fully, that his temper, if not his principles, disinclined him from such a deed; and his worst enemies, even more readily than his best friends, will acquit him of the suspicion of having been concerned in the machinations of a gang of mostly obscure desperadoes, whose undertaking, even if carried out, was by no means certain to be carried out successfully, while its betrayal by one or other of them was so likely as to be practically sure. Nor did even Fenwick accuse him of any such crime. He simply indicated in the confession, by which he hoped to save himself when arrested, such of Marlborough's transactions with James as he knew—transactions which, as a whole, were already known, and known on better evidence to William. Lest anything should be wanting to Marlborough's

chances, the feather-headedness of Peterborough (then Monmouth) completed the appearance of a cabal to expose deeds which William already knew, and had passed over, if he had actually not condoned them. The situation was such that a man of far inferior abilities to Marlborough, if he had only a little courage, must have got the better of it, and Marlborough did so triumphantly. He knew the king would not produce his own secret information; and in his place in Parliament he contented himself with the assertion, no doubt true, that he had no communication whatever with Fenwick. In all the divisions on the Bill of Attainder he voted against Sir John, and, assuming the fairness of that way of proceeding, it is scarcely reasonable to find fault with him. Nor does even Macaulay do so. For Fenwick, without any provocation, had aimed at Marlborough's ruin, if not at his death, and Fenwick, as Marlborough had very good means of knowing, was at least an accessory to a murderous plot with which Marlborough had had nothing to do. The imaginary person of untainted honour and immaculate principles whom Coxe biographises would no doubt have abstained from voting. But that person, as we have seen and shall see amply, was not Marlborough.

The effect of Fenwick's futile, though not exactly false, charges and of their rejection could not but be favourable to Marlborough. But it was long before he reaped the full reward of his astuteness. The saying which is recorded of William about the time of the Assassination plot, 'If I had been a private gentleman my lord Marlborough and I must have measured swords,' refers only, no doubt, to that rather fantastic assump-

tion of his wife's private grudges and quarrels which William found compatible with very cavalier treatment of her, and very questionable fidelity to her. But it was not till two years later that any signal mark of favour was bestowed on Marlborough, and even then the employments given to the man, who, had he been present, would most probably have turned Steinkirk and Landen into victories, were civil. But they were very honourable and important. He was made governor of the Duke of Gloucester, Anne's son, and in all probability the future King of England; he was resworn of the Privy Council, and when William left the kingdom he was a member of the Board of Regency. Macaulay pooh-poohs the explanation of this to be found in the fact that the Dutch *camarilla* influence preponderant with William was now not Bentinck's but Keppel's. Impartial judges will hardly doubt that this explanation is partly true.

At any rate, and however obtained, this favour was not again forfeited. Marlborough did not absolutely break with St. Germains, but his communications with it became infrequent and unimportant. He who had been the soul of the movement against the foreign soldiery voted for the retention of William's Dutch Guards. The death of his pupil in 1700 did not affect his position, and the marriage of his second daughter Anne to Lord Spencer, Sunderland's eldest son, opened a connection for Marlborough with the Whigs, to whom William, after some attempts to be impartial and some to govern by aid of the moderate Tories, inclined. But he aroused the watchful jealousy of the king slightly by a parliamentary interference with Prince George of

Denmark's money affairs, and though he used his influence against the Tory attack on Burnet in 1700, he voted for the Resumption Bill, which offended William almost more than the dismissal of the Guards. He, however, proposed to lessen the operation of the Bill in the Lords, and did not vote in the final division. Here his conduct occasioned a coldness on William's part, but it did not last. The last Parliament of the reign was Tory, and the Ministry was almost wholly so, so that Marlborough had less difficulty in maintaining his position, and on William's beginning his last campaign he was at last promoted to something like the place he deserved. He was charged both with diplomatic and military duties, and was especially instrumental in conciliating to the Grand Alliance the minor but still important powers of Sweden and Prussia in the ferment which followed the recognition of the Prince of Wales by Louis. Godolphin quitted office, and Marlborough, whose long familiarity with him had now passed into something like the complete partnership which the next reign saw, appears to have been much chagrined at this. But he himself lost apparently nothing of so much confidence as he had succeeded in re-establishing in William's mind, and when the king died one of his last recommendations is said to have been in Marlborough's favour.

Thus, then, we see Marlborough taking a chief, if not the chief, part in the expulsion of James; voluntarily opening communications with James when in the receipt of great honours and profits from William; engaging apparently in an elaborate and perhaps a double-edged plot; disgraced by William; continuing his offers

of shameful service to James, and in one instance doing actual service of a kind which has stamped him with indelible infamy; working with extreme ability on the feelings of Anne, and guiding those feelings more and more towards peaceful intercourse with William as Anne herself became more and more certain of succession; received back again into favour; and at last, even under William's own reign, within reach of, if not actually enjoying, the position due to his wonderful and manifold talents. The mere recital suffices to display those talents, but a few words more, even after what has been said at the opening of the chapter, may be needed to discuss the moral aspect of Marlborough's action. He won or saved game after game, but did he play fair?

With respect to one part of his conduct, the business of Camaret Bay, it can only be answered that he played so foul that the foulness is very nearly incredible. He never (unless the unproved story about the reasons of his slowness in relieving Webb at Wynendael be accepted) repeated the offence, but once was enough, and too much. For it was not as if James had commanded in person at Brest, as he did after a fashion at La Hogue. It was not as if Marlborough were carrying out his own offer to James some years earlier, and endeavouring to bring an English army over to its rightful king. On the contrary, an English fleet and an English army were attacking a French town defended by Frenchmen. The repulse of Berkeley and Talmash could do hardly the most indirect good to James; it must cost the lives of many brave Englishmen. As it seems to me, this is the one act at once certain and unpardonable which is alleged against Marlborough. He

may have deserted James out of conscientious scruples; it is not only possible, but highly probable, that he himself regarded his playing fast and loose with his allegiance to the two kings as an inevitable result of the anomalous state of things introduced by the Revolution—a state of things of which one sample may be given in the notorious fact that Parliament distinctly declined to pronounce William the only rightful and lawful king of England. In all transactions with the Chevalier subsequent to William's death, except when those transactions risked the lives of his soldiers and countrymen, Marlborough had a plausible and even a good defence. He would have said that it was his business to reconcile Anne to her brother, and that he had no design either against his mistress or his country, but merely wished to pacify the conscience of one and allay the distractions of the other. It might have been false but it might have been true. At any rate, this was the view actually taken by countless men of honour and good Englishmen, who, if Marlborough had been as he once had been, a Tory leader, in the last few years of Queen Anne, would pretty certainly have placed James III. on the throne. When the extraordinary distraction of motives and interests which then prevailed is fairly understood, Marlborough's general conduct will hardly appear the prodigy of villany which men like Macaulay strive to make it out to be. That it was the conduct of a man of strict and punctilious honour it would, of course, be simply absurd to assert. But strict and punctilious honour was very rare, or rather was of a very peculiar cast, in those days. How did the vast majority of the English clergy reconcile themselves to the oaths? How

did Nottingham, a man of unquestioned probity and of the strictest Tory principles, reconcile himself not merely to submit to William but to serve him? Nowadays a man who quits one set of political opinions and takes up another is looked upon a little askance, though only crackbrained fanatics on either side would say that the holding of either set was a matter of conscience, or the holding of the other a thing wrong in itself. In those days men seem to have easily reconciled themselves to holding opinions which the other side, and they themselves before they held them, had considered morally and religiously pernicious. All depends upon the standard.

But no standard of any time will justify the affair of the Brest treachery. As a soldier and as an Englishman no less than as a man of honour Marlborough should have recoiled in horror from such an act. He did not recoil from it, and the consequence is that if every other act of his life had been blameless he would still bear the indelible brand of this treacherous baseness.[1]

[1] It will be observed that no attempt is made, in the words of an in part very singular phrase of the late Dr. Burton's, to 'test the evidence for the charge against the young officer of having revealed to the Jacobites the expedition against Brest.' The 'young officer,' it may be observed, was forty-four, and had been a young officer very nearly thirty years. To enter, in a book like the present, on an elaborate examination of the historical value of what Macaulay calls 'the archives of the House of Stuart,' or of the question whether Marlborough betrayed a secret or officiously volunteered information which was generally known, would be out of place. It will be sufficient for the plain man that so thoroughgoing a defender as Coxe does not attempt to deny the fact of the communication, but merely tries to palliate the act and minimise its importance.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST PERIOD OF GENERALSHIP-IN-CHIEF—BLENHEIM.

THE history of Marlborough's campaigns as commander-in-chief of the English forces, during the greatest series of military operations (save one) in which England has ever been engaged,[1] is, of course, the most brilliant

[1] Many questions in regard to Marlborough's life have been more debated, but few are less settled than the question of the exact numbers of English troops properly so called, as distinguished from foreign troops in English pay, with which he won his victories. The data on the subject are neither numerous nor clear, and they are further complicated by the invariable and exasperating habit of counting by battalions and squadrons - units variable even at the beginning of a campaign, and almost incalculable towards the middle and end of it. The convention executed before William's death fixed forty thousand men as the English contingent, and after the first campaign Parliament voted ten thousand more; but the majority of these were subsidised only. The most assured facts are as follows: At Blenheim Marlborough had fourteen battalions and fourteen squadrons of English troops, and as at the beginning of a campaign it was usual to make the battalion up to five hundred and the squadron up to one hundred and twenty men, this would give seven thousand foot and nearly seventeen hundred horse. It seems from various testimonies not decisive, but fairly sufficient, that the *cadres* were pretty full at Blenheim, and this would give about nine thousand men as the contingent of British blood which fought there. The loss here and elsewhere must have been great, for, as we shall see, Marlborough at the end of the campaign estimated his fourteen English

and certainly not the least interesting chapter of his life. It exhibits his greatest qualities in circumstances which, for a time at least, were almost uniformly favourable to their display; for the jealousies and stupidities on his own side with which Marlborough had to contend brought out his moral and intellectual capacities no less than the dispositions of the enemy. Even in this period his defects are also manifest, though, with one or two exceptions, nothing is laid to his charge that can even approach in enormity the desertion of his early patron or the treachery of Camaret Bay. In the account that follows, the purpose of this series, no less than the dimensions allowed to its volumes, excludes minute description of military operations or dilation on the general political history of Europe. The former may be found at length—at a length, perhaps, greater than is either agreeable or profitable to civilian readers—in numerous books; knowledge of the latter may be presupposed, except where some special statement of fact is necessary to illustrate the real object of these pages—the character and genius of Marlborough.

In no historical instance, perhaps, have circumstances

battalions as not more than enough to make seven full ones. On the other hand, at the extreme end of the war, when Ormond, in obedience to orders, separated from the allies, but when almost all the foreign auxiliaries stayed behind, he is said to have taken with him twelve thousand British troops. As these numbers, which seem to be tolerably precise and trustworthy, date from the beginning and the end of the war respectively, and as the English troops present at Blenheim are not likely to have represented the whole force made up from England in the spring of that year, we may take it that, as a rule, there were between ten and twelve thousand Englishmen born in Marlborough's armies, besides, no doubt, a considerable proportion of staff officers and officers serving with the auxiliaries.

combined to give a man of great genius, long cramped by want of opportunity, so perfect an occasion as was offered to Marlborough by the accession of Anne. His wife's dominion over the queen's spirit was, of course, the most important single factor in the problem of his success, but it was by no means the only important one. Had Anne had for husband any other man than George of Denmark, Marlborough would probably have been hampered with the annoyance, if not the actual interference, of a nominal superior in the field. But *Est il possible?* was contented, if not entirely contented, with the title of generalissimo and residence at home, leaving that of captain-general, with complete control abroad, to Marlborough. No English soldier (for Ginkel's experience and merit were not likely to make any Englishman forget that he was Dutch, or Ruvigny's that he was French) approached Marlborough in military reputation. But it was even more important that he had, after a long period of distrust, been completely restored to William's confidence before his death, had been intimately engaged in the literary and diplomatic preparations of the king's last days, and, so to speak, held all the threads already in his hand. Add to this the facts that the unwisdom or the chivalry of Louis had, by his recognition of the Prince of Wales, complicated the quarrel of the Spanish Succession with what was, or seemed, an irreconcilable provocation of England, and that consequently a war on the greatest scale was inevitable, that the French finances were approaching disorder, their best generals and administrators dead or not come to maturity, their people wearied of forty years of war and taxation, and their nobility disgusted by the Pharisaism of the Court; add

all these things, and some glimpse of the chances which Marlborough had in his favour must be obtained. Against him he had the almost unbroken prestige of the French arms; their troops, more homogeneous, better equipped, better officered, and under more complete and absolute control of the directing spirit than any army of Europe; the jealousies and intrigues of the allies; the unquiet state of English parties; the inevitable drawbacks of parliamentary government. The following chapters will show how he dealt with these elements of success and failure, and how they dealt with him.

War was declared against France and Spain by England on May 4, 1702, and Marlborough, who since the queen's accession had visited Holland to arrange preliminaries, departed for the Hague on the 15th of the same month.[1] Thanks to Heinsius, he soon obtained the all-important commandership-in-chief of the Dutch

[1] A passage from his first letter to Sarah has often been quoted, but is too characteristic and too certainly sincere to be omitted. Marlborough, be it remembered, was fifty-two years old, and was nearly entitled to celebrate his silver wedding with the termagant who made herself so attractive:—'It is impossible to express with what a heavy heart I parted with you when I was by the water's side. I could have given my life to come back, though I knew my own weakness so much that I durst not, for I knew I should have exposed myself to the company. I did for a great while, with a perspective glass, look upon the cliffs, in hopes I might have had one sight of you. We are now out of sight of Margate, and I have neither soul nor spirits, but I do at this moment suffer so much that nothing but being with you can recompense it. If you will be sensible of what I now feel, you will endeavour ever to be easy to me, and then I shall be most happy: for it is you only that can give me true content. I pray God to make you and yours happy: and if I could contribute anything to it with the utmost hazard of my life, I should be glad to do it.'

forces, but not without raising several jealousies, among others that of Prince George. The war was begun with vigour in Flanders, but except the capture of Venloo, which was mainly brought about by the gallant storm of an outlying fort under Cutts, the operations of the campaigns of 1702 were chiefly confined to the endless marching and counter-marching characteristic of the old school of warfare, and for which Flanders had been, partly by nature and partly by art, turned into an elaborate parade-ground. This comparative futility, indeed, was not Marlborough's fault. The slackness, not to say disobedience of the Dutch generals and of the deputies who, according to a fatal Dutch habit, accompanied him to represent the States, prevented a general engagement, under favourable circumstances, at Helchteren on August 23, and gave the enemy an opportunity, which they promptly took, of retiring from a very dangerous situation. But the capture of Venloo was followed by that of Liège and other places, and the balance of the campaign was distinctly in favour of the allies. It was nearly redressed by an accident which happened after both armies had gone into winter quarters. Marlborough left Maestricht on November 3, and proceeded by boat down the Meuse. The greater part of his escort lost their way, and his boat was surprised by a scouting-party of the garrison of Guelder. He had no pass, but by a very singular chance a servant with him had an old pass, granted to his brother General Churchill, and the captors, unaware of the value of their prize, and pacified with some money, detained only the soldiers on board the boat, and let Marlborough and his

companions, the deputies, go.[1] He was cordially received at the Hague, and the achievements of the campaign, which contrasted favourably with the results of Ormond and Rooke's contemporary expedition to the Spanish coast, gave some colour to his promotion in the peerage as Marquess of Blandford and Duke of Marlborough, which took place on December 14. He also received a large pension, but details of this and of other civil and political events of his career are reserved for a future chapter.

The winter of 1702–3 was made memorable to Marlborough by the death of his only surviving son, a blow equally severe to his ambition and to his strong family affections. It was, no doubt, fortunate that the campaign of the next year opened early and called for all his energies. The Marquess of Blandford, who after passing through Eton had gone to finish his education at Cambridge, died there, on February 20, of small-pox, and in little more than a fortnight Marlborough was facing a formidable combination in the Netherlands.

The chief French effort was indeed intended to be made in a quarter other than that where Marlborough commanded, by a combined movement from Italy and through the Black Forest upon Austria proper, but there was no intention of quiescence in the Netherlands, or even of confining the French operations to the defensive. Villeroy, who commanded, had instructions to recover the fortified places on the Meuse which Marlborough had taken the year before, and to threaten the

[1] Marlborough observes characteristically, in a letter to Sarah, 'He [the servant, whose name, it seems, was Gell] has cost me 50*l.* a year ever since.'

Dutch at home. Marlborough, who easily perceived this design, perceived also the means of frustrating it. Had he been allowed, he would, after putting the Rhine-Meuse frontier in a state of defence, have *riposted* by a counter attack in French Flanders, which would have effectually stopped Villeroy; but the Dutch, as usual, were alarmed at anything like a bold policy, and obliged him to confine himself to the reduction of Bonn, which they thought threatening, and to the defence of the Meuse. He carried Bonn on May 15, and then resumed his purpose of operating aggressively in the west, reducing Antwerp and Ostend, and so penetrating into France. This was the first large design that Marlborough had had opportunity to form, and it was to be carried out not merely by operations in Flanders but by a descent from England on Dieppe; but the insubordination and self-seeking of the Dutch commanders once more foiled him. Cohorn, whose great abilities as an engineer were accompanied by no small defects both as a general and a man, first went wool-gathering into West Flanders, nominally to make a diversion, but, as Marlborough hints, really for the sake of plunder; then, being detailed with other Dutch generals to attack Antwerp, he kept touch and time so badly that one of these generals, Opdam, was surprised by a greatly superior French force and his division dispersed. Marlborough's remark, made in a letter on first hearing the rumour of this disaster, is characteristic of his restrained but often striking style: 'Since I sealed this letter we have a report from Breda that Opdam is beaten. I pray God it be not so: *for he is very capable of having it happen to him.*'

Finally, these egregious commanders fell to a violent quarrel among themselves, and when at last Marlborough, after immense efforts, had succeeded in bringing matters nearly to a crisis, a council of war refused to fight. He succeeded, indeed, in taking Huy, Limburg and Guelder, and thus strengthening the Dutch frontier against attack; but every bolder counsel during the summer and autumn was systematically opposed by the deputies. He had, however, the satisfaction of being largely instrumental, by his private diplomacy (which was always a most important feature in his conduct of affairs) in detaching the Duke of Savoy from the French alliance, and so ruining the grand combination against Austria above referred to. He returned to England on November 10, and is said to have been so much disgusted, not only with the Dutch (for the English Ministers most imprudently gave the States some real excuse for complaint by withdrawing a portion of the English forces), that he seriously thought of throwing up the command. When it is remembered that in two whole campaigns, with splendid opportunities apparent, he had been able to do nothing but reduce a few petty fortresses, owing to the obstinacy and folly of the Dutch, there is some reason for believing him sincere.

The moment of his triumph was, however, approaching, being, as usually happens in such cases, a moment of such danger that the folly on his own side was for a moment overawed. The defection of the Duke of Savoy had spoilt the French combination for the year, but towards the close of the campaign great compensating advantages had been obtained by France. The Hungarian insurrection on one side, and the growing power

and successes of the Elector of Bavaria on the other, put the Emperor in the greatest jeopardy, and after detaching the forces necessary to hold the French army in check on the Italian side it appeared impossible that the Imperialists should make head against the invasion threatened for the beginning of 1704. In the very earliest days of that year Marlborough not only conceived, after correspondence with Prince Eugene of Savoy,[1] the ablest general of the Empire, but (which was more difficult) carried into execution, despite the factiousness of the English Ministry and Parliament and the timidity and jealousy of the Dutch, a counter-scheme. The plan was simple enough, and it was executed by degrees which made it look even simpler. Restricting the operations in the Netherlands proper to the defensive, and leaving them to be carried on by the Dutch troops only, Marlborough proposed himself, with the English troops and some of the subsidised allies, to operate on the Moselle. He obtained supplies and reinforcements from the English Parliament, subsidies and payment of arrears from the States in a visit to the Hague which he made in January, and during the first three months of the year he laboured incessantly to carry out the design, which was really for a series of operations far bolder than a mere excursion into the Palatinate. He left England a second time on April 19, completed his

[1] The reader may be reminded that the mother of this great general, who on his father's side inherited the blood of the reigning houses of France and Savoy, was Olympe Mancini, one of Mazarin's nieces. She was deeply compromised in the 'affair of the poisons' (1679), for which La Voisin was executed, and had to fly from France. Resentment at this disgrace, much more than the legendary refusal of a commission by Louis, determined Eugene's hatred of the French.

arrangements with all the speed he could, and exactly a month later broke up his camp, which had been formed near the Meuse, and began the campaign to be known as that of Blenheim. It was in vain that Auverquerque,[1] who had been left to command the Dutch, tried almost immediately to lure him back by rumours of movements on Villeroy's part, and that the Margrave of Baden, who was commanding the Imperialists at Stollhoffen, asked for support there. Marlborough knew that Villeroy would follow his own false trail to the Moselle, and held on his way. Then he moved to Coblentz, thence to Mayence, and after a short delay made for the Upper Danube. The enemy had all this time no idea of his actual design, and were so much puzzled by it that, but for the mismanagement of the Margrave of Baden, the Elector of Bavaria and Marsin (the French general who was acting with him in his own dominions) might probably have been beaten before Tallard (the commander of the proposed French invasion of the Empire) could have joined them. Marlborough, however, never received much real assistance during his campaigns from any foreign general except Eugene, and he had to do all the work of this campaign himself. His combinations for the union of a formidable army under his own command from the different allied states of Germany were carried out with perfect accuracy. Even after Louis of Baden's blunder he had in the last days of June got together a most formidable force to attack the Elector.

The point of importance which the enemy had already

[1] Often also spelt 'Overkirk.' The Margrave of Baden, just below, is indifferently called by historians Margrave, Prince, or Prince Louis of Baden.

perceived and guarded was the town of Donauwerth, situated where a spur of hills touches the Danube, commanding the main road across the river, and forming in an unusually real sense the key of Bavaria from the north. The Elector and Marsin occupied, with the main body of their forces, a position about half-way between Donauwerth and Ulm at the other extremity of the spur of hills above mentioned; but they had posted at Donauwerth itself, on a strong eminence called the Schellenberg, a force of nearly thirteen thousand men of all arms under Count D'Arco. Their position being entrenched and defended by morasses, and the intervening ground hilly and difficult, Bavaria seemed to be sufficiently guarded till succour could arrive from Tallard and Villeroy. Everything depended on rapidity, and Marlborough took advantage of the very questionable but then common system of alternate days of command to 'rush' Donauwerth. The scheme necessitated a forced march of two days, and an attack on the strong position of the Schellenberg after a hard morning's marching. It may be doubted whether any general but Marlborough would at that time have attempted such a feat, and it cannot be doubted that the 'irregularity' of it greatly assisted his plans. In mere numbers he had the advantage, but the assailants of the Schellenberg had to storm entrenched works under a heavy fire at the close of a day's work, and as the assault was not begun till six o'clock a steady resistance had every chance of maintaining the place till night, and so giving the Elector time to come up. The defence was, in fact, obstinate, and the loss of the allies very heavy, amounting to 1,500 killed and 4,000 wounded; but the Schellen-

berg was carried by the obstinate bravery of the English and Dutch troops, and the whole occupying force, except 3,000 men, slain, wounded, taken or dispersed. The town of Donauwerth was shortly afterwards abandoned, and the Elector withdrew to Augsburg. The first line of the Bavarian defence was, in fact, completely broken. But this success was not achieved without great jealousy on the part of Marlborough's colleague, the Margrave of Baden, who had had the easier part of the work, and it is remarkable that with him only of all his colleagues does Marlborough seem to have somewhat lost his temper. The German *morgue* of the Prince of Baden, who, no doubt, despised a mere English subject, had probably something to do with this, and something also to do with the steadiness with which Marlborough shortly afterwards refused the rank of Prince of the Empire until Leopold accompanied it with a solid if not very extensive fief, such as would put him finally beyond danger of similar awkwardnesses.

All this time Eugene, a very different colleague and partner from the Margrave, was holding Tallard and Villeroy in check in the famous lines of Stollhoffen, opposite Fort Louis, on the German side of the Rhine — a position which for more than a century was the chief point of observation of German armies against France. French critics have exclaimed against the inaction which allowed this position to be maintained against a far superior force; for Tallard and Villeroy had 60,000 men to the prince's 15,000. But it seems to be forgotten that this is a singularly lame excuse in the first place, and (in the second) that it is by no means certain that offensive action would not have been a mere antici-

pation of the disaster of Blenheim. For the lines of Stollhoffen, a complicated system of entrenchments, dykes, sluices, hill-forts and the like, were, in the hands of such a general as Eugene, practically impregnable, though three years later Villars, the best captain of France, succeeded in breaking them when under the incapable guardianship of the Margrave of Baden.

However this may be, Eugene maintained his position, and the news of the Schellenberg fight, and of the subsequent passage of the Lech by the allies, made it necessary for the French to change their plan. Tallard set out to relieve or reinforce the Elector, Villeroy remained to prosecute the campaign on the Rhine. No time was to be lost, and in hopes of detaching the Elector, who since the Schellenberg had been constantly driven back, negotiations were opened by Marlborough. They were listened to for a moment, but faithful to the long alliance of Bavaria with France, and encouraged by the news of Tallard's advance, the Elector finally rejected them. Then a step was taken which has sometimes been urged as a crime against Marlborough. The part of Bavaria occupied by the allies was given up to plunder and devastation. Marlborough, whose worst enemies allow him to have been perfectly free from cruelty, deplores this in his letters to his wife, and there is no reason to suspect him of hypocrisy. But it was the well-understood custom of the time, and, as designed to force the Elector to accommodation, stands in a completely different category from the repeated devastations of the Palatinate by the French—devastations undertaken either in revenge, in pure wantonness, or for the purpose of depriving the enemy of a place of sojourn.

While this was going on, the two armies of Tallard and Eugene were on their way to the scene of action. Tallard had nearly thirty-five thousand men, Eugene, relieved at Stollhoffen and slightly reinforced from the interior of Germany, not above half the number, while there was the further difficulty that the important fortress of Ingolstadt still held out. This made the position of the allies in Bavaria, now that the Elector was likely once more to have an army capable of meeting them in the field, far from safe. Whether, as has sometimes been held, the advantage of getting rid of the Margrave of Baden overcame all other considerations in the minds of Marlborough and Eugene, who met to consult, though Eugene's troops had not yet crossed the Danube; or whether the garrison of Ingolstadt and the town itself were judged worthy of such a sacrifice, need not be determined. It is sufficient to say that the Margrave, with about fifteen thousand men, was left to besiege Ingolstadt, and that Marlborough with the rest hurried to join Eugene's troops who had remained beyond the Danube. The French and Bavarians were at Hochstadt, near to the Elector's old position at Dillingen and Lauingen, where they purposed to join Tallard. Both junctions were effected, Tallard meeting the Elector and Marsin at Dillingen and advancing beyond Hochstadt to the position of Blenheim, while Marlborough's troops crossed at Merxheim and Donauwerth, advanced up the stream to the Kessel rivulet, and then joining Eugene's troops, which had fallen back from Hochstadt, took up a position along the Nebel facing the French. Their rear rested partly on the outskirts of the spur of wooded hills above referred to

as impinging on the Danube between Dillingen and Donauwerth. On looking at the plans of the ground it is impossible not to see that the allied position, though a capital one to conquer in, was a very bad one in which to be beaten. The Danube, deep, broad, and with marshy banks, on the left, the woody hills on the right, the narrow pass of Dapfheim on the rear, might have frightened generals who thought of securing their retreat, and it seems certainly to have been Tallard's idea that Marlborough, having safely joined Eugene's small force, intended to march off to the right by Neresheim to Nordlingen. This expectation, recorded by Tallard himself, throws much light on what followed. As for the forces engaged, the usual discrepancies exist, and are aggravated by the fashion (then universal) of reckoning, not by numbers or states, but by battalions and squadrons, which, of course, could not be maintained at a uniform strength. The most trustworthy estimates put the allied forces at about fifty-two thousand men, the French and Bavarians at about fifty-six thousand, the former being somewhat stronger in cavalry, the latter in artillery. The material on both sides was good, but the French had the advantage in this respect, their army including at least forty thousand veteran French soldiers whose regiments had scarcely known defeat for half a century.

The mistake of the French generals is said to have been confirmed by dint of the common ruse of allowing prisoners, carefully instructed in the same information, to fall into their hands, and the forward movement of the allied troops on the morning of August 13 was assisted by misty weather. The movement, however,

soon became unmistakable, and, though the complete misapprehension of the enemy's intentions could not but produce an unfavourable effect, Tallard and his colleagues were ready with their order of battle. It proved an unfortunate one, but the critic who has read much military history cannot help perceiving that it might easily have proved successful. The right and left of the position, the former consisting of the village of Blenheim, or Blindheim, and resting on the Danube, the latter of the village of Lutzingen, and resting on the wooded uplands, were very strongly occupied. The centre was weaker, and it was, in fact, this weakness that lost the day. But the Nebel river or rivulet was surrounded with such marshy ground that Tallard apparently thought it impassable or difficult to pass, and he probably imagined that no general would dare to expose himself to an attack on both sides, from Blenheim and from Lutzingen, if he did pass it. He found his mistake, but it is not certain that he would have found it against any generals save those who combined daring and circumspection in such an extraordinary degree as Marlborough and Eugene. It ought also to be reckoned to Tallard's credit that he summoned, though without success, reinforcements from Marsin and the left as soon as he saw the enemy's dispositions.

Those dispositions, for a force inferior in number and attacking a strong position, were singularly bold. Marlborough made no attempt to execute the usual manœuvre of an assailant and to decline, or amuse, one part of the defence while he threw his whole strength on the other. Eugene was to attack, and, if possible, outflank the Elector and Marsin ; four brigades of in-

fantry and one of cavalry, chiefly English, under Cutts, were to attack the village of Blenheim, which was entrenched, palisaded, defended by a strong artillery, and occupied by at least thirteen thousand men, the very flower of the French army. In the midst, under the immediate command of General Churchill and of Marlborough himself, the main body of the allies, including fully seventy squadrons of cavalry, who, to the surprise of the tacticians of the time, were ranged between the first and second infantry lines, were to cross the Nebel and break the French centre. The attack could not begin seriously till Eugene was in position, and as he had a detour to make and difficult ground to get through, this did not occur till midday, the interval being spent in the usual cannonading. As soon as Eugene was in his place, Blenheim and the line of the Nebel were attacked simultaneously.

The battle was none of those which are won at once, and the first attack on Blenheim seemed to justify Tallard's dispositions. Notwithstanding the utmost gallantry on the part of Cutts and his troops, it was repulsed with heavy loss, though with no disorder on the English side, and had for the moment to be suspended. Nor was the centre attack at first much more promising. The enemy promptly brought their guns to bear on the troops as they crossed the swampy ground, and though the crossing was successfully effected, two assaults of the French, the first made by Zurlauben's cavalry, the second by the famous Irish brigade, were very destructive, and the latter was nearly successful, requiring Marlborough's own presence and vigorous action to rally the troops. Meanwhile, Eugene on his

side had quite as hard work, and one charge of the French cavalry in particular nearly prevented the crossing of the Nebel, while shortly afterwards the whole of Eugene's horse were on the point of being routed. But the prince rallied his troops and made good his ground. Marlborough too, after about four hours' fighting, had completely established himself on the French bank of the Nebel, and at five o'clock moved upon Tallard's weak centre. If Tallard could have brought up the strong and now almost idle garrison of Blenheim it might have gone hard with the allies, and there is some dispute on the point why this was not done. His enemies accused him of having lost his head: others say that the orders were actually given but intercepted or not obeyed. At any rate the moment passed, and Marlborough, with the great body of cavalry above mentioned, charged and completely broke the French centre. It never rallied, many of its component troops were pushed into the Danube, others cut down, others hopelessly dispersed, many, with Tallard himself, taken. Marsin and the Elector waged a somewhat more equal fight with Eugene, and it is said that a mistake helped them in their withdrawal. But the French left, thus escaping, was the only part of the army that remained together. The right, in Blenheim, though it must have been impossible for them except by a miracle to recover the day, might possibly have also escaped. For Marlborough's troops were weary and in part dispersed after the fugitives; Eugene had enough to do with watching the retreat of Marsin and the Elector; and as at the end of the day the Blenheim garrison consisted of nearly eleven thousand choice troops of all arms, it may certainly

seem that they might have cut their way through. But they had no commander, Clérembault, their general, having in some incomprehensible fashion got himself drowned. Marlborough rapidly got artillery into position, and at last the whole force surrendered at discretion, an event which surprised the French at the time and has vexed their historians since beyond all the rest of the disaster. It was, as a disaster, sufficiently complete. Of an army estimated, as above, at 56,000 men the Elector and Marsin had not more than 16,000 remaining with the colours. The victors, as the attacking party, lost very heavily also, their killed and wounded being put as high as 12,000. But some of the captured regiments, which were composed of Germans, came over bodily, and a large number of other prisoners also enlisted.

Such is a brief account of the battle which, after nearly fifty years, destroyed the prestige of the French army, and to a great extent its *personnel*, and which after nearly three centuries gave the English name the lustre of a great continental victory. It has been said that military critics, always prone to follow the result, have perhaps blamed Tallard too much, but it is hardly possible to give Marlborough too much credit. A little less audacity in the attack of Blenheim would probably have set free its garrison to act in the centre; a little more obstinacy in continuing the attack would have lost the time and means necessary to break through Tallard's forces. It is in this flexibility of plan and adaptation of expedients to circumstances that generalship above all consists. But nothing can be more certain than that, with a less staunch and dashing comrade

than Eugene, victory would have been, if not impossible, hardly possible for Marlborough. Eugene was twice pressed almost as hard by the French left as Tallard was by Marlborough, and if he had either given way or called on the English for succour, a drawn battle would probably have been the most favourable consequence. But throughout their joint campaigns Eugene and Marlborough present the most striking example to be found in the lives of great generals of good comradeship. They seem always to have played the game with the spirit and the confidence of two good partners at whist, each of whom is conscious that to disregard his partner's play, or to hesitate at sacrifices on his own part, is as foolish as it is unsportsmanlike. The system of double or treble commands so frequent in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is undoubtedly a very dangerous one, but if it could be always carried out after the Marlborough and Eugene fashion it would more than justify itself. For the partners, with equal loyalty to each other, possess necessarily more authority, more scope for independent action, and less need of troublesome reference for orders than mere generals of division, while in case of mishap there is always someone to fall back on. The reverse of the picture was shown in the French case, for it is abundantly clear that the Elector and Marsin were stronger than was necessary to hold Eugene in check, and that if Marsin had complied with his colleague's request to strengthen the centre, or even if, at the time of the great *trouée* at five o'clock, his right had been more careful of supporting Tallard than of getting itself out of harm's way, the English-Imperialist victory would

have been, to say the least, much less complete. The skill which Marlborough showed in this joint generalship —an ordeal from which hardly any general of great merit but himself and Eugene has come out unscathed— makes the length of this digression on a particular point excusable.

The results of the battle of Blenheim were great. Bavaria, except a few strong places, was unresistingly at the allies' disposal; the war was transferred from the German to the French side of the Rhine, and only the stout defence of Landau prevented Marlborough's cherished plan of an invasion of France from being carried out in the campaign of 1704. The latter half of August was occupied by the overrunning of the open country of Bavaria, and by the arrangements necessary for reducing Ulm, the most important place left to the enemy, for the obtaining of which on amicable terms Marlborough had opened negotiations with the Electress. In the early days of September all the troops that could be spared both from Bavaria and from the lines of Stollhoffen rendezvoused at Philipsburg, so as to attack Landau, a place always of the highest importance, both as guarding the approach of France from Germany and as exposing Germany to invasion from France. It seemed not impossible that Villeroy, to whom the command had now been committed, might fight to defend the fortress, and Marlborough gives us an idea of the severe work his army had undergone by saying that if he comes to action he means to reduce the English, Danish, and Hessian battalions to half their present number. But the French had no stomach for more work in the field, and Villeroy quickly withdrew from

between the allies and Landau, a proceeding which, in Marlborough's own words, would never have been adopted 'if they had not been the most frightened people in the world.' The garrison of Landau, however, showed more spirit, and the Margrave of Baden, who was immediately charged with the siege operations while Eugene and Marlborough covered him, could make no impression on it till the end of November. Marlborough's wishes for an active prosecution of the campaign on the line of the Moselle were also thwarted by the timidity of the allies; but he succeeded in gaining an important success despite these drawbacks. Leaving Eugene to cover the siege, he set out with about twelve thousand men, marched through the hills of Wasgau and the Hochwald, then almost a desert, to Trèves, seized it before the French could intercept him or strengthen its weak garrison, and thus provided winter quarters, which he very much wanted, and which were secured by the siege and capture of Traerbach. Although of no great note in ordinary histories, this was one of the boldest of Marlborough's adventures, and he uses language both of apprehension before and satisfaction after its completion which is much stronger than that applied by him to far more showy undertakings. A natural fear of losing the laurels of Blenheim counts, no doubt, for something in this, but it is equally clear that he depended on those laurels as likely to frighten the French from taking advantage of his audacity; and he was right.

CHAPTER VI.

SECOND PERIOD OF GENERALSHIP—RAMILLIES AND OUDENARDE.

At the opening of the campaign of 1705, Marlborough's fame was established as one of the first generals, if not the first general, of Europe. His operations in 1702 and 1703, and his march from Holland to Bavaria in 1704, had not contributed to this less than the victory of Blenheim in the general estimation; for in the one case he had shown himself a complete master of the accepted military ideas of the time, and in the other astonishingly superior to them. It was long the fashion to speak contemptuously of the marching and counter-marching and then going into winter quarters, to which Frederick the Great in some measure and Napoleon finally put an end. This contempt ignores the simple fact of a century of steady road-making. As long as, with very few exceptions (chiefly consisting of old Roman roads), the communications of Europe were merely tracks across ground in its natural condition—as long as vast tracts of country were uncultivated, undrained, and alternating between heath and morass, according to the time of year and the state of the rain-gauge, a few days of rain or snow or frost made it a physical impossibility to move armies which had become

nearly as much encumbered with artillery and impedimenta as our modern armies, but which were totally destitute of our means of communication. As always, this impossibility served to some extent as a reason for exaggerating it, and Marlborough's transfer of operations from the Netherlands to the Upper Danube was the first brilliant and brilliantly successful effort *contemnere vana* that Europe had seen. The effect of it was heightened by the proofs he had given of his complete ability to handle troops in the more steady-going and old-fashioned manner. It is true that he had not met (and never did meet in one case) the best generals of the French army, Catinat and Villars; it was true that he had won only one great battle; but he had given his proofs sufficiently and finally to a generation which included a greater proportional number of fairly skilled military critics than perhaps any generation before or since.

He was not destined to a similar career of triumph in 1705, or indeed in any subsequent year, though during the whole of his tenure of command his faculties as a general rather increased than diminished. But, the master-blow which deprived the French of their military supremacy and freed the House of Austria from imminent danger once delivered, the hampering influences which beset the Grand Alliance had free play. Of these influences the English part will be dealt with separately and continuously; the foreign part may best be handled here. It may be observed that it furnishes a necessary and, in my opinion, a complete justification for the peace which, violently opposed and cried down by Marlborough's own party, put an end to the war

that had made his renown nearly ten years later. I shall endeavour to avoid use of strong language in this and any other place where I have to discuss this part of the subject. All French and some English authors have pleased themselves with denouncing the selfishness of the House of Austria; most English and some French authors the selfishness of the Dutch; not a few writers of all nations the factiousness and inconsistency of the English. Let us clear our minds of cant. In the first place, and as it more specially concerns us, the selfishness of the Imperial Court does not seem to me one jot more noteworthy than that of its allies. The stupidest Aulic councillor knew perfectly well that England was, to say the least, not fighting for the *beaux yeux* of the Empire, that the Dutch were very anxious to snap up whatever trifles might be sufficiently unconsidered by Austria or by Spain, that the various miscellaneous and stipendiary allies, from Prussia downwards, were chiefly anxious to aggrandise themselves at the expense of the Holy Roman realm. The Dutch, the English, and the allies were conscious of corresponding truths, and the fact explains at once the head which France was able to make, and the limited, delayed, and chequered success of Marlborough. He was never beaten, being in that respect unique among great generals; but it was certainly not the fault of his good allies; and on one memorable occasion scandal has not hesitated to hint—though, as far as I can see, without any justification—that it was not altogether his own.

He left England on March 31 and had an exceedingly bad passage to Holland. His purpose was to utilise the operations of the last autumn on the Moselle,

and especially the possession of Trèves and Traerbach as places of arms for the invasion of France on that side. The editor of Coxe makes a singularly feeble criticism on the supposed feebleness of this plan and on the waste of time involved in the siege of Saarlouis and the waiting for concentration of force. Why did not Marlborough act like Napoleon? The answer is partly given in the remarks already made on the entire change introduced by good and numerous roads, and partly by the very obvious reminder that Napoleon was sole master of his armies. Marlborough had to propitiate a score of jarring interests before he could get leave for his troops to march, and to keep them propitiated in order that he might feed those troops. It was a month before he could reconcile the Dutch to operations on the Moselle at all; it was long before the Austrian authorities could be persuaded not to confine themselves to the suppression of the Hungarian insurrection and to act with vigour on the Italian and German-French frontiers. Moreover, as Eugene was to return to Italy, Marlborough had the pleasure of knowing that the Margrave of Baden, the Imperialist commander deputed to work with him, would do all he could to interfere with his projects.

Louis of Baden succeeded. He at first refused to act with Marlborough at all, then alleged his Schellenberg wound as a pretext for delay, and at last, visited and pressed by Marlborough himself, promised to rendezvous at Trèves. This promise was made with, as it would appear, no intention whatever of keeping the *fides germanica*. The consequence was that Marlborough, who had hoped to have on the Moselle an

army of 90,000 men, found himself obliged to open the campaign with a third of the number, and never received the Margrave's troops at all. He had, moreover, opposed to him, in the heavily-wooded and hilly delta of the Moselle and the Saar, Villars, the ablest general of France, with a force superior to his; and Villars made such good use of the fortified camp of Sirk—a position known in warfare since as that of Rethel—that Marlborough, disappointed of his reinforcements and of his transport, could make no impression on him. Villars's own account, given in his agreeable Memoirs, undoubtedly shows the gasconading which (in singular contrast to Marlborough's sober fashion of recounting his own exploits) was as much a part of the marshal's character as his valour and his military genius. He blandly doubles Marlborough's troops and imports the Margrave of Baden on to the scene. However, like an honest boaster, he supplies the means of correcting his own boasts, and admits that Marlborough sent him a message to say that it was not his fault, and that the Prince of Baden had broken tryst. Still, it is unlikely that any other French general would have made this head against Marlborough, and Villars, as later at Malplaquet, and still later at Denain, is justly entitled to the credit of having stemmed a tide of victory.

After all, it was not Villars who was the chief cause of the invasion being abandoned. The failure of the German auxiliaries had enabled the French to strengthen their Netherlands army, and Villeroy, who was by no means so incapable a general as it pleased the French to represent him when he had lost Ramillies, moved forward on the Meuse with a large force, took Huy,

captured the town of Liège, invested the citadel, and held Auverquerque completely in check. If Villars had been as completely master of the situation as he (no doubt, sincerely) would have had himself thought, he should have been able to hold Marlborough while Villeroy finished Auverquerque. But no general in Europe could do that. Badly off as he was for transport, Marlborough broke up his camp suddenly and silently, countermanded his reinforcements, left his heavy stores at Trèves, frightened Villeroy from Liège by the rumour of his approach, joined Auverquerque on July 3, and at once assumed the offensive. As if nothing could go right except when he was present, the German general whom he had left to protect Trèves and Saarbruck abandoned both with large magazines, and some of the chief fruits of Blenheim were thus completely lost.

Marlborough, however, made himself amends in Flanders by one of those comparatively bloodless successes which, even more than his four great battles, showed his mastery of war. He easily retook Huy, and not satisfied with this, determined to attack the great lines of Brabant, which ran in a series of entrenchments, ditches, redoubts, and fortified towns from Namur on the Meuse to Antwerp on the Scheldt, and which made the invasion of France in that quarter impossible, while they furnished at once a cover for Brussels and the great towns of Flanders, and a camp from which the French could sally as they pleased. All Marlborough's operations had hitherto been carried on to the outside of these lines; thenceforward they were all carried on within them.

The attempt was the bolder in that Villeroy held the lines with 70,000 men, a force actually larger than Marlborough could bring to bear. But though no general was ever less rash, none was ever more perfectly bold. The point which was selected for attack was between Tirlemont and Landen, or (taking the direction of the lines) between Leuwe and Hedelsheim. This point, the march to which led over the very field where William III. and Luxemburg had a dozen years earlier fought the bloody battle of Neerwinden, was protected by a small but difficult stream, the Little Gheet. The attempt was made, despite the objection of some of the Dutch officers, on July 17, and was completely successful, the lines being forced, the French defeated, and a large number of prisoners taken, with very small loss on the side of the allies. Marlborough himself was in no inconsiderable danger, being for a time separated from his troops. Even here, however, the inveterate overcaution or jealousy, or both, of the Dutch marred his success. The slowness with which they brought up their army interfered with the due reaping of the fruits of victory: a few days later their hesitation balked an attempt to cross the river Dyle; and finally, on August 18, on the very field of Waterloo, prevented a general engagement which had every chance of proving a brilliant victory. Marlborough was so much distressed by this last proceeding that he again threatened to throw up the command, though he was persuaded not to do so; but nothing more of importance happened in the military way, and after a certain amount of marching and encamping the campaign of 1705 closed. But though he was prevented from attacking and, as

cannot be doubted, from obtaining a complete victory, the greater part of the lines which had so long covered Brabant was demolished.

The early winter months were spent by Marlborough in a tour to the German capitals, wherein his diplomatic abilities, which are certainly not inferior to his military powers, were exercised with success. He did not visit England till the new year, when the treacherous amalgamation of Whigs and Tories, which for a short time promoted his interests but was finally fatal to them, was brought about. This, however, with other matters of the same kind, deserves a chapter to itself. The diplomatic tour had solid results of a kind neither military nor diplomatic, for it was during its course that the barren honour of an unendowed principality, which Marlborough had been offered and had refused, was exchanged for the solid gift of the seigniory, now made a principality, of Mindelheim. This he accepted. Mindelheim was a very pretty little tiny kickshaw of a principality; it is situated on the western frontier of Bavaria, somewhat to the south of Ulm and Augsburg, and about equidistant from both, its chief town being at present a station on the railway from Munich to Schaffhausen. It extended (according to the map in Coxe's atlas) [1] in a mulberry shape about fifteen miles by twelve, was plentifully diversified with wood and water, and had its capital (a small townlet with a dilapidated castle) exactly in the middle. Among the previous holders the only ones likely to have much interest for modern English readers are the Dukes of Teck and the Fuggers.

[1] A German description of it sent to Marlborough gives it as six leagues in length and from three to four in breadth.

But it had passed into the possession of the Bavarian house, and the Emperor's claim to dispose of it was, to say the least, questionable, though a certain reversionary right of his was not disputable. Marlborough, it may seem, would have been wiser to imitate the shrewd man of business who stipulated with Cromwell, much to Cromwell's disgust, for 'my old land;' but, on the other hand, he may have thought it best to take what he could get. He received investiture at Innspruck, the heavy fees being mostly remitted, and took possession by proxy, Stepney, the English minister at Vienna, being his representative. The necessary ceremonies were performed on the spot with great decency in the last week of May, in the presence of citizens to the number of 250 and peasants to the number of 1,500. John Joseph, Baron von Imhoff, was solemnly sworn as grand bailiff, with full powers for paying bills up to the limit of fifty florins, and the administration as a whole was estimated to cost about three thousand five hundred florins, or between four and five hundred pounds. Marlborough was supplicated to continue a pension to the ill-endowed convent of English nuns, and his representatives were entertained by the College of Jesuits, which had 'a better bottom,' with a sort of opera in Latin, celebrating his Grace's heroic virtues. Stepney found the city to consist of 'a long, clean, well-built street, with water running through it,' but the castle was decayed and used as a granary. Further, the magistrates 'surprised' him with 'a very handsome basin and ewer worth six hundred florins,' and the surprise seems not to have been disagreeable. The principality was heritable by heirs general; the territory, like other fiefs of the Empire,

went to male issue only ; but it produced to Marlborough for some years about two thousand English pounds yearly, which, if small for an English duke to take, was not small for a German emperor to give. It is worth while to insist, in view of the perpetual charge made against Marlborough's avarice, that this acquisition was really a benefit to the allies generally and to England particularly, as raising the English general to a theoretical as well as real equality with the German princes, who were constantly tempted to dispute his rank. Is it not within the memory of living men that a dignitary of the Papal Court slighted a petition of English Roman Catholics because, as he complained, there were 'no signatures of princes'?

The campaign of 1706 was begun unusually late by Marlborough, his long stay on the Continent in the winter and his English political business detaining him in London till the end of April, and when he finally landed at the Hague his plans were still coloured by the remembrance of the gratuitous and intolerable hindrances which he had met with from his allies. He knew (and everyone who has studied the facts must know) that in all human probability he would, but for the Margrave of Baden, have penetrated the heart of France (just as the Germans in 1870 penetrated it) in the early summer of the preceding year ; that, but for the sluggish dulness of the Dutch deputies and the venomous jealousy of the Dutch generals, he would have driven the French out of Brabant in the late summer. Accordingly he had made up his mind to operate with Eugene in Italy, which, if he had done, there would probably have been seen what has not been seen for nearly two thousand years—

a successful invasion of France from the south-east. But the kings of Prussia and Denmark, and others of the allies whom Marlborough thought he had propitiated, were as recalcitrant as the Dutch, and the vigorous action of Villars against the Margrave of Baden made the States-General more than ever reluctant to lose their sword and shield. So Marlborough was condemned to action on his old line of the Dyle, and this time fortune was less unkind to him. Secret overtures were made which induced him to threaten Namur, and as Namur was of all posts in the Low Countries that to which the French attached most importance, both on sentimental and strategical grounds, Villeroy was ordered to abandon the defensive policy which he had for nearly two years been forced to maintain, and to fight at all hazards. Accordingly the tedious operations which had for so long been pursued in this quarter were exchanged at once for a vigorous offensive and defensive, and the two generals, Villeroy with rather more than sixty thousand men, Marlborough with that number or a little less, came to blows at Ramillies (a few miles only from the spot where the lines had been forced the year before) on May 23, 1706, or scarcely more than a week after the campaign had begun. Here, as before, the result is assigned by the French to the fault of the general. Villeroy, who had with him the unfortunate Elector of Bavaria, should, they say, have waited for Marsin, who was detached by Villars to reinforce him, and he should not have taken up the position which he actually did. But it does not seem to be denied that Villeroy was actually stronger than his assailants; it is forgotten that his orders to cover Namur left him

hardly master of the time of fighting a battle; and as for the position, it was certainly one which, in the hands of Villars or of Marlborough, would have been nearly impregnable. It consisted of a semicircular range of high ground above the source of the three rivers Mehaigne, Great Gheet and Little Gheet, defended not merely by the slope of the ground but by marshes in the bottom. It had the drawbacks common to almost all positions of the kind, that the defences constituted of themselves as great a hindrance to advance on the one part as on the other, and that, the chord being shorter than the arc, the assailants could throw the weight of their attack on a given part quicker than the defenders could concentrate their defence. For this reason the lines of Brabant had been thrown outside of it. But those who urge this fact against Villeroy forget that those lines had been already lost and demolished, and that he had to make the best of what he had.

The salient points of the position were the villages of Tavières on the extreme French right, of Offuz on the middle left, and of Autréglise or Anderkirk on the extreme left: in front of both of these last ran a morass. The village of Ramillies was in the centre, and behind it, on the crest of the upland, rose a tumulus called the Tomb of Ottomond, close to which, from the allied left, a causeway, named after Queen Brunehault, led straight upwards. Opposite Autréglise was the village of Foulz, which was part of the allied position.

The battle itself was one completely of generalship, and of generalship as simple as it was masterly. It was in defending his position, not in taking it up, that Villeroy lost the battle. An elaborate feint against the

French general's morass-covered left drew reinforcements from his right. Then Marlborough (and this was undoubtedly the master-stroke) affected to draw his troops back to the high ground of Foulz for a fresh attack, and in reality detached great part of them behind the crest to support his own left, which at once 'rushed' Tavières, the causeway and the village of Ramillies. At this latter point there was very hard fighting, and Marlborough himself was in some danger; but the French centre was completely cut through, the right at Tavières had already been stormed and broken, the troops which had been left to maintain the appearance of an attack on the French left forced their way through the morass and beat the enemy, who had been weakened again by a tardy counter-movement of Villeroy's when he found the real direction of Marlborough's assault, and all divisions of the French army being thus driven in, the pursuit was urged home with such vigour that the French and Bavarians broke wholesale, and the entire army literally took to its heels and fled to Louvain and Brussels, abandoning guns, baggage, colours, almost in a mass. Thirteen thousand of the French and Bavarians were killed, wounded, and taken, and the loss of the allies, who had been throughout the attacking party, was not less than four thousand men. The entire credit of the dispositions belonged to Marlborough, but his Dutch colleague Auverquerque, an excellent soldier and a loyal comrade, though afraid of responsibility and destitute of initiative, deserves much of the credit of the execution. Indeed the Dutch, who bore the burden of the attack on Ramillies, had the credit of the day's fighting on the allied side, as the Bavarian horse had on that of the

French. In hardly any of Marlborough's operations had he his hands so free as at Ramillies, and in none did he carry off a completer victory; not even Frederick or Napoleon, despite the far greater facility of physical movement and the irresponsible freedom of action which each had, ever improved a success so thoroughly. The strong places of Flanders fell before the allied army like ripe fruit. Brussels surrendered and was occupied on the fourth day after the battle, May 28. Louvain and Malines had fallen already. The French garrison precipitately left Ghent, and the duke entered it on June 2. Oudenarde came in next day, Antwerp was summoned, expelled the French part of its garrison, and capitulated on September 7. And a vigorous siege in less than a month reduced Ostend, reputed one of the strongest places in Europe. In six weeks from the battle of Ramillies not a French soldier remained in a district which the day before that battle had been occupied by a network of the strongest fortresses and a field army of 80,000 men. The strong places on the Lys and the Dender, tributaries of the Scheldt, gave more trouble, and Menin, a small but very important position, cost nearly half the loss of Ramillies before it could be taken. But it fell, as well as Dendermonde and Ath, and nothing but the recrudescence of Dutch obstruction prevented Marlborough from finishing the campaign with the taking of Mons, almost the last place of any importance held by the French north of their own frontier, as that frontier is now understood.

But the difficulties of all generals are said to begin on the morrow of victory, and certainly the saying was true in Marlborough's case, as no one knew better than

himself. Esquire South and Nick Frog (to anticipate the nomenclature of Arbuthnot's immortal satire) were heartily agreed in driving out Lewis Baboon, but no sooner had Lewis Baboon been driven out than the old quarrel about the division of the conquered or recovered territory began. The Dutch were, before all things, set on a strong barrier or zone of territory, studded with fortresses in their own keeping, between themselves and France: the Emperor naturally objected to the alienation of the Spanish-Austrian Netherlands. The barrier disputes were for years the greatest difficulty which Marlborough had to contend with abroad, and the main theme of the objections to the war made by the adverse party at home. For nothing so much as these disputes brought out the fact, in itself a hardly disputable one, that the war was more and more being waged not for any English interest but for the interests of Dutchmen and Germans, each of whom wished to overreach the other, with England's aid and at her expense.

It was in the main due, no doubt, to these jealousies and hesitations, strengthened by the alarm caused by the loss of the battle of Almanza in Spain, and by the threatened invasion of Germany under Villars, that made the campaign of 1707 an almost wholly inactive one. Vendôme, who had succeeded Villeroy as the Elector of Bavaria's colleague in the Netherlands, was an excellent general, and though he protested his intentions of fighting, it may be doubted whether he was not fully conscious of the ascendency which Marlborough had obtained over the *morale* of the French, always disposed to yield to a general who has twice or thrice thoroughly beaten them. At any rate, the campaign of this year is

almost wholly barren of any military operations interesting to anyone but the mere annalist of tactics. When at last, after nearly two months' sojourn in the camp of Meldert, Marlborough moved on Genappe and Nivelle—a move which made it necessary for the French to retreat or fight—they chose the former alternative, and they repeated it when, after another interval of forced inaction, owing to heavy August rains, he again threatened a flank movement. Finally, Vendôme fell back on Lille, and all chance of active operations was over for the year. But it shows Marlborough's perfect knowledge of the complicated political and military situations with which he had to deal, that in the midst of the disappointment and worry of this year he predicted the battle of Oudenarde next year.[1] Looking back on the events, it is of course easy enough to see the reason of his confidence, but it was not equally easy for him to be confident. On the one hand the Dutch, and to a less degree the Germans, would never permit decisive action on his part, except under that immediate pressure of fear which had enabled him to win both Blenheim and Ramillies, while everywhere else (except on the occasions when Eugene was allowed free action in Italy) the dissensions and jealousies of the allied commanders prevented the chance of success. On the other hand, as he himself remarks, successes in Spain and Italy and Germany did the French no good so long as Marlborough was constantly at hand, on

[1] Aug. 15, 1707, to Godolphin: 'As they will not venture, they are now in a country where they may march from one strong camp to another and so end the campaign, which I fear they will do.' A month later, to the same: 'I am of opinion that the war will be decided in this country by a battle *early in the next campaign.*'

the most vulnerable part of their own frontier, ready to take advantage of every opportunity. This position must have secured him ultimate success but for the jealousies of the allies and the still more dangerous intrigues at home, which in this very year entered their most dangerous stage with the establishment of Mrs. Masham's influence over the Queen. But, at the same time that it made his prospect of success in the end hopeful, it made an immediate course of free and victorious action (the two things were in Marlborough's case synonymous) certain to be intermixed with long periods of forced inactivity.

The campaign of 1708 had not long begun when it was seen that his predictions were likely to be verified. But those predictions themselves show the injustice of the attempt usually made by French writers to throw the blame of the defeat on the Duke of Burgundy, who, representing at once the Royal family and the Catholic-Methodism which was now powerful at Court, was joined with Vendôme in the command. Operations did not begin very early, for it was an inseparable disadvantage of Marlborough's diplomatic abilities, and the frequency with which he was called upon to exert them, that his winter diplomacy should interfere with or at least postpone his summer warfare. In the present year he was unable to get to the Hague before May 9, and the execution of his orders for the concentration of the troops was delayed by drought till the end of the month. He had, and knew that he had, his work cut out for him. Not that he was afraid of the Duke of Burgundy. 'I hope,' he says, in one of his curiously pregnant sentences, 'the Duke of Burgundy will come.

Not that he feared overwhelming numbers on the enemy's side. But an extensive plan of communications with the towns which had surrendered after Ramillies was partly known to be in course of prosecution on the French side. On the other hand, he might count on little interference from the Dutch deputies, who, as usual when the States-General were alarmed, had instructions to cease troubling.

Marlborough had originally arranged that Eugene should act on the Moselle. But, long before it actually occurred, he perceived that the French, working on interior lines, would be able to reinforce their armies quicker than he could. It thus soon became clear that Vendôme and the Duke of Burgundy were really much stronger than himself, and intended, if possible, to recover the line of the Dyle. He sent to the Prince of Savoy to join him at once. Before Eugene could comply, Vendôme's plan seemed to be meeting with some success. A rapid counter-march enabled him to throw parties out to Ghent and Bruges, both of which had been previously tampered with, and both surrendered. The French also threatened the still more important post, though less important town, of Oudenarde. There was nothing for it but a battle, with or without Eugene, and it was fought with Eugene but without Eugene's troops. It may be observed that the insinuations of Marlborough's enemies (which may be found cleverly put in 'Esmond,' p. 241), as to the inaction of the last campaign, and the apparent misfortunes of this at the beginning, rest upon no foundation whatever, and are contradicted by every consideration of reason, and by Marlborough's own statements, made long before Oude-

narde, and to persons whom he was not in the least likely to try to deceive. He seems to have somewhat undervalued the extent of the reinforcements which Vendôme had received at the beginning of the campaign, he was unaware of the full extent of the tampering with Ghent, though he had discovered and frustrated that with Antwerp, and his movements were hampered by the necessity of covering Brussels. Nor, as he himself had urgently summoned Eugene, can there be the least truth in the suggestion that it was Eugene, not Marlborough, who determined the battle.

The exact circumstances which led to that battle appear to have been somewhat mistaken by most of Marlborough's biographers, including Coxe, and owing to this mistake they have given some colour to the insinuations of interested blunders or inaction on Marlborough's part. According to them Marlborough, when Oudenarde was threatened, made a forward march, cutting off the enemy from their base, and so forced the battle, and this (after his backward policy immediately before) might to unfriendly witnesses seem to have something to do with Eugene's arrival. But anyone who looks at the memoirs of Berwick [1] will see that there was a fully sufficient reason for Marlborough's action. Berwick was not at Oudenarde himself, but he had a good deal to do with it. He had been commanding on the Lauter against Eugene, and when that prince broke up from Coblentz to join Marlborough, Berwick was ordered in the same way to strengthen Vendôme and the Duke of Burgundy. A plan was made between them by which he was to act from Mons, and Vendôme

[1] Ed. Michaud et Poujoulat, xxxii. 395, 396.

and Burgundy were to move southward to join him before Eugene's troops could get up. And it was the danger of this junction and the march to execute it that gave Marlborough at once a motive and an opportunity for fighting. That the dissensions of the French generals helped the victory is not denied, though the question has often been quite unnecessarily and absurdly complicated [1] by alleging the distrust of the orthodox party and the Duke of Burgundy for the freethinking libertine Vendôme. With the utmost rapidity Marlborough marched to Lessines and secured the passage of the Dender, for which the French generals had been making in the execution of their plans with Berwick. He then advanced towards Oudenarde. The battle was a very curious one, and though Marlborough's bold attack with inferior forces disconcerted his opponents, it could hardly have been the complete victory it was but for the dissension of the French commanders—a dissension of which the English general was well aware, and by which he was determined to profit. The affair began by a kind of race for the possession of the high ground above Oudenarde. Both armies had to cross the Scheldt to gain this, but Marlborough's vanguard under Cadogan won the race. It might have been a dangerous winning, for Cadogan had but an advanced guard, and the whole of the French army was close at hand. In fact, save that Oudenarde was at hand to retire into (which made all the difference), Marlborough's movement might have

[1] Especially by Michelet and those who follow him. It may be noted that that great writer's accounts of all these campaigns and the transactions connected with him, are eminently characteristic of his imaginative, though industrious, method.

been charged with rashness. Vendôme, however, was quite aware of his advantage, and gave orders to attack — orders immediately countermanded by the Duke of Burgundy, who ordered a different disposition, though he, like Vendôme, was resolved to fight. But the change gave Marlborough's main body time to arrive and form, while it left the troops which Vendôme had sent farthest forward so exposed that Cadogan was able to annihilate a whole brigade. The general battle did not begin till past four o'clock, and then the French commanders again interchanged orders and counter-orders. The result was a further delay of the action, which, when it was once fully engaged, became one of the most confused in history. Of Blenheim, of Ramillies, of Malplaquet, it is possible to write briefly but intelligibly and certainly; of Oudenarde, without an elaborate plan, only a succession of details of operations conveying no general idea can be given. It may suffice to say that the hesitation and meddling of the Duke of Burgundy allowed the English cavalry to keep the whole French left inactive, that the English left centre engaged, overlapped, and completely beat the French right; that the French household troops fought excellently but in vain; and that only the darkness and the fear which the allies entertained of firing on their own troops as they closed in allowed any part of the French army to retire in order. It is said to have lost some fifteen thousand men in killed, wounded, and prisoners, principally the latter. The allies lost about three thousand in killed and wounded, there having been very heavy fighting at some points, although no general resistance on the part of the French. Marlborough's letter to Godolphin contains

the memorable words, 'I did give them too much advantage,' and it is quite certain that against Villars or Berwick he never would have dared to fight a superior force after a hard day's marching on the part of his own troops, and, as far as can be seen, with little artillery to support him. But this is the only battle of Marlborough's that was fought in front of a fortified town.

There was no time lost after the victory. Little more than twenty-four hours had passed after the last gun was fired when the siege of Lille, the great bulwark of French Flanders, was determined on, and before forty-eight hours were over the first parallel, so to speak, was opened by the capture of the lines of Comines only an hour or two before Berwick and La Mothe, advancing from different directions, were ready to defend them. Meanwhile Eugene was sent to bring up his own troops and collect materials for the siege. As Marlborough's desire first to secure Ghent, like the events before Oudenarde, has been twisted into an accusation against him, it may be well briefly to consider the situation.

The battle of Oudenarde had been a signal victory, but owing to the late hour at which it was fought it had by no means been a complete one. Marlborough in his letters repeatedly wishes he had had 'An hour more daylight,' 'Two hours more daylight,' and the like, and no one who considers the circumstances will wonder either at this wish or at the reluctance to undertake the siege of the strongest fortress in the marches of Flanders which accompanied it. Not only had nightfall largely reduced the otherwise probable numbers of killed, wounded, and prisoners on the French side, but it had

enabled the fugitives, who were at first in utter disorder (not more than fifteen or sixteen thousand men having accompanied Vendôme in military order), to rally round the strong places of Ghent and Bruges, which treachery had just made theirs. In operating against Lille, therefore, Marlborough had behind him an army of at least fifty or sixty thousand men, while the hostile position of Ghent made it impossible for him to receive supplies or guns by water, the Scheldt and the Lys being both commanded by the enemy. Further, if he attacked Lille he had to reckon with Berwick, who had a very considerable force behind that town resting on the strong place of Mons, from which he could at any moment advance and cut the communications of a force besieging Lille from the Brussels side. We know from Berwick's memoirs that he himself recommended a plan of action which, if it had been boldly carried out, would have entirely prevented the investment of Lille, while Marlborough's army would have been in no small danger. This was that Vendôme and the Duke of Burgundy should advance between Marlborough and Eugene and give battle to the prince, who, with his Moselle forces (which had at last come up), was escorting a great convoy of all sorts of stores to the army in the lines of Comines or Werwyk. Berwick himself was to answer for Marlborough's troops. The uncle and the nephew were so alike in military genius that it may be taken as certain that Marlborough foresaw this combination in which the advantage of position and numbers would alike have been on the side of the enemy; but Vendôme, perhaps disgusted with the mishaps of Oudenarde, refused to budge from Ghent, and Eugene

effected his junction with Marlborough safely. The authorities which Coxe and other biographers follow represent this junction, it is true, as the result of pure generalship on the part of Marlborough and Eugene, and allege that Vendôme and the Duke of Burgundy did actually detach a force to intercept it. But the account in the memoirs[1] of Berwick, though briefer, is more trustworthy, and it is in fact supported by the numbers of the force mentioned in the opposite story. Vendôme and Burgundy are said to have sent 18,000 men. Now Eugene's own army was far stronger than this, and if the force was really despatched Eugene had nothing to do but to march past it. It can scarcely be counted to Marlborough's discredit that he hesitated to set the main hope of the allies on a cast so desperate as this would have been if Berwick's plan had been carried out.

As, however, Eugene had arrived, the siege was determined on, and the immediate investment was consigned to his care, Marlborough retiring on the Scheldt to hinder the junction of Vendôme and Berwick, and to superintend the passage of the necessary convoys from Brussels and the Netherlands. Lille was garrisoned by 15,000 men under the veteran Marshal Boufflers, perfectly fortified and supplied with a staff of the best officers in the French service, a service which then had no rival in Europe in the scientific branches. Although it is certain that Marlborough had originally, as any prudent general would have done, preferred the plan of recovering Ghent before attacking Lille, there is not in his voluminous private letters, and certainly not in his public conduct (with one exception, to be dealt with

[1] In continuation of the passage cited above.

immediately), the least evidence of any flinching or underhand dealing. The actual siege was directed by Eugene, but the real responsibility rested on Marlborough, for if Berwick and Vendôme had united earlier, or if a single convoy had failed to get through, it must at once have been raised.

The junction of the two French armies was effected on August 30, Boufflers having been hard pushed in the last days of that month, and the audacity of the siege then became apparent. Vendôme and Berwick had between them nearly 110,000 men, independently of the garrison of Lille, while the whole force at the disposal of Marlborough and Eugene for service in the field and for maintaining the investment was at least 10,000 men weaker. Marlborough, however, on whom the task of covering entirely rested, was quite equal to the occasion. He had already chosen a position on the route of the relieving army to the south of Lille, had entrenched it strongly, and after observing their march he slipped into it and awaited them. Several French authorities, including Chamillart, the minister of war, appear to have been anxious for an attack, which, if delivered, would probably have finished the war for the French, and must have been repulsed with ruinous loss; indeed, Marlborough was on the point of delivering a counter-attack which, at least possibly, would have had the same result; but here the Dutch deputies, long innocuous, interfered. The design of relieving Lille by force was, however, given up, and Vendôme and Berwick trusted to intercepting the necessary supplies. This was not a vain hope; the town was very strong, was obstinately defended, and was, if Marlborough may be

trusted, attacked, as far as engineering went, with some slackness by the allies.[1] This slackness certainly did not extend to fighting, a succession of desperate attacks being made, in one of which Eugene himself was wounded and 2,000 of the besiegers put *hors de combat*. The siege of Lille indeed occupies the position of a kind of minor siege of Troy with some of Marlborough's biographers. We are told of the personages, celebrated already, or soon to be celebrated, who flocked to the camp to watch the expected duel between the sciences of military attack and defence; of the battles for the salient points of the surrounding ground, especially a certain chapel; of the movements and counter-movements of Vendôme, Berwick, of Marlborough; of the gradual drawing closer of the investment, and of the desperate hand-to-hand fighting which followed. It may be more particularly noted that in the contest just referred to, where Eugene was wounded, we have one of those rare pieces of information alluded to above (Note, p. 61), where the exact number of English-born troops engaged is mentioned. Five thousand Englishmen took part in Eugene's assault, which resulted in the making good of a lodgment. The severity of the contest is best shown by the fact that at the end of it the garrison had lost eight thousand men, the besiegers fourteen thousand. The incident most striking to the imagination in the whole siege was perhaps the desperate attempt made by the French to get powder through to the besieged by packing it in bags on men's backs. It would be, of course,

[1] Marlborough frequently complains of his engineers. He seems to have been chiefly, if not wholly, dependent for this branch of service on his allies.

probable at any time, and most probable in those days of flintlocks, that the powder would in a fight explode with certain destruction to the bearer, and this actually happened in many cases. The besieged had suffered greatly for want of provisions and ammunition, but the besiegers themselves were not much better off, and one crowning attempt to cut off their supplies led to a miniature battle which, both for the gallantry displayed in it, the decisive effect it had on the siege, and the curious suspicions which have been excited by its circumstances, deserves detailed notice.

During the war, as in all wars between France and England during the eighteenth century, there was constant talk and occasional trial of descents on France which had never been successful. In this year a certain General Erle had been wool-gathering about the coasts of Normandy and Brittany with no result. To get some good out of him, Marlborough suggested that Erle should occupy Ostend and make it a convenient entrepôt of supplies for the army at Lille. His advice was followed; Erle showed some ability in clearing the neighbourhood of Ostend, and a very large convoy was got together there to meet the necessities of the besiegers. Nor were the enemy idle; Count de la Mothe with a force which, by Berwick's testimony, was thirty-four battalions and sixty-three squadrons strong (Marlborough says forty battalions, but only forty-six squadrons) was detached to seize the convoy. On his side, Marlborough sent first a force of foot and horse under two German brigadiers, then General Webb with twelve battalions of infantry but no horse, and lastly, Cadogan with an infantry force equal to Webb's and twenty-six

squadrons of cavalry. Only 150 men of these latter horse joined Webb, who had also to detach a considerable force of infantry partly to occupy points of vantage, partly to accompany the convoy, and it was with not half La Mothe's infantry and with no horse at all, except the handful just mentioned, that Webb met the French forces in front of the wood of Wynendael. The French, however, were badly led and they fought worse, while Webb posted his men with great skill and fought them with dauntless courage. La Mothe was completely defeated, and the convoy had filed off safely behind the wood when Cadogan came up with the rest of his cavalry. La Mothe was still so superior in that arm that, the main object being the security of the convoy, pursuit was not attempted; but unquestionably the most brilliant of the minor actions of the war remained to the credit of Webb, and the fate of Lille was practically sealed. All readers of 'Esmond' know what followed. Not only was Marlborough accused, with some justice, of imputing the merit of the action as much to his favourite Cadogan, who had been a mere spectator for only a part of the time, as to Webb, who had borne the burden and heat of the day, but he was further charged with having been bribed by the French throughout the campaign, with having winked at the capture of Ghent and Bruges, with objecting to the siege of Lille from corrupt motives, with declining battle more than once when he might have given it with advantage, and finally, with having sent an inadequate force, under a general personally obnoxious to him, to oppose La Mothe, in hopes that the convoy might be cut off and the further prosecution of the siege rendered impossible. It is not necessary to dwell on this much.

That Marlborough, like most generals, was somewhat given to favouritism is undoubted, and the language in which he spoke of Cadogan here, though not at all above his general merits (for Cadogan was perhaps the ablest divisional officer in the English army) was certainly unfair to Webb. It ought, however, to be said that the account in the 'Gazette,' of which Webb's friends chiefly complained, is not traceable to Marlborough, and that he speaks, repeatedly, very highly of Webb in his letters to Godolphin, urging that the queen should specially compliment him, and suggesting against his immediate promotion only some obstacle (which seems to have been a real one) arising from etiquette towards the Dutch. Certainly no one, from these letters, would infer any enmity to Webb. With the other accusations (which, it must be remembered, have not one tittle of evidence to support them) a very short way is possible. First, let anyone read Marlborough's letters—his private letters to confidential friends—and then say whether they are more to be trusted to than these baseless rumours; next, if he has any doubt left, let him ask himself two plain questions: Was Marlborough, one of the coolest-headed men in Europe, likely to risk his vast realised fortune at the bait of a bribe, the reception of which, if discovered—as it was nearly certain to be—would have utterly ruined him? Was he, whose concern for his military reputation was second only (if it was second) to that avarice with which he is charged by his enemies, and that family affection which they allow, likely to provoke a failure, the disgrace of which would have fallen not on Webb, not on Eugene, but on himself?

The believers in these fantastic stories rejoiced to think that Marlborough was baffled; he certainly was if the reduction of one of the first fortresses in Europe, mainly owing to his own consummate generalship, baffled him. The battle of Wynendael was fought on September 27, and though Vendôme continued his attempts to intercept convoys, and succeeded after some time in storming the important post of Leffinghen, which secured the route from Ostend and Nieuport, the siege was carried to extremities, and, on October 22, Boufflers beat a parley, yielded up the town, and retired into the citadel. The siege of this latter was continued for nearly seven weeks more, though the enemy attempted a new method of relief, the Elector of Bavaria marching upon Brussels with 15,000 men. The garrison, however, were faithful, and Marlborough soon obliged the Elector to retreat by attacking the French posts on the Scheldt at Oudenarde, a position which the enemy had been fortifying ever since the battle, and which was carried on November 26, partly by fighting but still more by a very ingenious series of feints and false offers of attack. This passage of the Scheldt, in effect, decided the campaign: the citadel of Lille surrendered on December 8; the French, unable or unwilling to fight through the winter, went into quarters, and Marlborough, at once moving against Ghent, forced it to capitulate on the last day of the year. Bruges and the minor places were evacuated, and thus this long and arduous campaign, in which, unfavourably as it had begun, Marlborough had shown almost more genius than in any other, was ended.

CHAPTER VII.

THIRD PERIOD OF GENERALSHIP-IN-CHIEF—MALPLAQUET AND THE PEACE.

THE unusually long and arduous campaign of 1708, as it was of all Marlborough's campaigns that which (in the battle of Oudenarde, the covering operations of the siege of Lille, and the passage of the Scheldt) perhaps best showed his military genius, so it was the last in which fortune can be said to have been really favourable to him. One of his four great victories had yet to be gained: but it was gained with a frightful and disproportionate loss which lent some colour to his enemies' allegations. The sieges and manœuvrings which filled up the rest of the campaigns of 1709 and the two following years, before Marlborough was dismissed at the end of 1711, though displaying his talents to the full, were of a comparatively petty and uninteresting character, the general being hampered not merely by his old foes the Dutch deputies, but by the increasing strength of the party in England adverse to the war. With the exception of the 'soldier's battle' of Malplaquet, the period presents but little of military interest to any but a professional student, and it will be passed over here with more rapidity than the earlier part of Marlborough's career as general. Such as it was it closed

that career, and in a sense may be said to have closed Marlborough's career of public importance altogether. Neither in the further operations of the war till the Peace of Utrecht, nor in the stormy politics of the last months of Queen Anne's reign, nor even in the events which followed the accession of the Elector of Hanover, did he take any share commensurate to his genius. From a head he became a figure-head, nor is there any quite parallel example of so complete a fall. The reason for it will be more apparent when we have surveyed the long and tangled course of English political disputes which originally brought the fall about, and of which Marlborough, though not always an active participator in it, owing to his absence abroad, was always a keenly interested spectator. Here we shall sketch his three last campaigns, consider rapidly the peace of which his dismissal, though some time elapsed between the two events, was the certain forerunner and in a way the chief cause, and then dismiss his performances in the capacity which has made him most famous, that of military leader.

The spring of 1709 was occupied by the negotiations at Gertruydenberg, which will be noticed in the next chapter. But hostilities were resumed before the hopes of peace were finally disconcerted. Eugene still continued to be Marlborough's colleague, and the successes of the foregoing year had so strengthened their army that they were enabled to take the field with 110,000 men, the largest force that Marlborough had ever had under his command. On the other hand Louis had at length had the wisdom to commit the command in Flanders to Villars, who despite his gas-

conading was by far the ablest general of France, except perhaps Berwick, and the only one who had inflicted even a colourable check on Marlborough. It is not easy to calculate his exact force. In one place he calls it 60,000 only, but as he estimates Marlborough's at 130,000, and says shortly afterwards that he had '50,000 less,' it is evidently fair to give him at least 80,000. The appalling financial disasters of France are allowed to have left him very badly supplied with provisions and stores, but on the other hand he himself admits that owing to the agricultural distress he was supplied with the best class of recruits he ever saw. He had, moreover, the advantage of resting upon the network of fortresses, all the work of Vauban's skill, which lined French Flanders and the French side of Hainault, and as the Allies were bound either to take or mask these, while he could, as he pleased, draw on their garrisons or reinforce them if they were attacked, a certain inferiority of numbers was more than made up on his side. The contest, therefore, was not an unfair one, though it is greatly to Villars's credit that he made it, as he did, impossible for the Allies to proceed far from the frontier.

The operations of the campaign may be divided into two parts, a division which materially helps the understanding of them. The first consists of operations against the lines of La Bassée, held by Villars, which operations, either intentionally or perforce (for Villars and Marlborough differ on this point), were exchanged for the siege of Tournay. The second consists of the siege and capture of Mons, which Villars endeavoured to interrupt and so brought about the battle of Malplaquet.

In the first part of the operations, the French general occupied entrenchments on what may be called generally the space between Arras and Valenciennes, though his actual position varied according to the movements of the enemy. It is admitted that it was stronger than either Eugene or Marlborough cared to attack, though Villars, in his own peculiar fashion of self-glorification, declares that they might, if they had chosen, have beaten him, forced the frontier, and pushed on to the gates of Paris. But when they had come to a decision and changed their plan to the siege of Tournay, Villars held, and admits that he held, the mistaken opinion that the place would occupy them for the rest of the campaign. The fact that he had just before weakened the garrison by drawing on it, pretty plainly shows that he did not expect the movement. In consequence chiefly of this weakening and of the insufficient provisions, the town, which Villars was not alone in thinking impregnable, was taken after less than a month's siege. Another month, which was distinguished by desperate subterranean fighting in the mines for which Tournay was famous, carried the citadel. Villars harassed the besiegers, but could neither seriously disturb them nor avail himself of their occupation to advance into the Netherlands.

But before Tournay was done with, the designs on Mons were begun, and the very day that the first-named town hung out the white flag a detachment was sent, with supports following it, to operate against the second. Villars being again caught napping, the important lines of the Trouille, which were part of his defences in the direction of Mons, were surprised and made good by the Prince of Hesse-Cassel, thus cutting the French general

off from the town. It was so weakly defended that Villars could not entertain any hope of its holding out, and as the loss of it would not only sacrifice Hainault but render his defence of France itself vulnerable, he determined to fight to regain if possible the lines of the Trouille. This was the origin of the battle of Malplaquet. It was fought with as nearly as possible equal forces on both sides, the French being slightly superior in cavalry, the Allies rather more superior in infantry. But Villars had by this time been enabled to bring his recruits (whose good quality has already been noticed) into military trim, and had had no serious fighting, while Marlborough and Eugene had lost heavily at Tournay. The most uncertain part of the whole matter is the circumstances which made the Allies instead of Villars the actual aggressors. Eugene was nearly always for fighting, but why Marlborough, who never lost his head, should have preferred to attack an immensely strong position held by nearly if not quite equal numbers, instead of letting Villars, as he must have done if he wished to save Mons, himself attack, is wholly obscure. He even allowed Villars time to strengthen a position which was already strong. Generally speaking, the position of Malplaquet consisted of a large opening or *trouée* between the woods of Taisnière and Lanière. Villars's force rested on and occupied both these, and was besides strongly entrenched and defended with cannon, not only in front but along the flanks in the woods. Smaller woods in front and behind the main plantations were also occupied, and the whole position was among the most formidable that any army has had to attack. There was hardly any manœuvring,

and the only movement of a tactical character that can be said to have had much influence on the result, was the march of General Withers by a circuitous course through the wood of Taisnière, which partly outflanked Villars's left. The main battle consisted of desperate charges into the woods and against the entrenchments, followed, when the assailants were not blown to pieces, by hand-to-hand fighting. Villars was wounded before the engagement had lasted very long, but Marshal Boufflers, who had voluntarily come to serve under him though his senior, conducted the battle skilfully enough, and the defeat of the French, which was complete, can only be attributed to their being simply fought down by the superior tenacity and dash combined of the Allied troops. The numbers were practically equal, and the defenders had an infinite superiority of position. There are few battles in history of which it can so certainly be said that the best men won.

The carnage, however, was tremendous, especially among the veteran Dutch troops, who were boldly, but very unskilfully, led by the Prince of Orange. Very few prisoners were taken, the French making off in good order, and the allies being too exhausted to pursue. But the loss in killed and wounded has been put as high as thirty-five thousand men on the allied side and fourteen thousand on the French, while the much lower estimates which are usually accepted and which, being taken from official sources on both sides, seem most probable, are twenty thousand and eight thousand respectively. In Marlborough's own words, it was 'a very murdering battle.' Mons resisted longer than had been expected, and Berwick made one attempt to

relieve it, but the possession of the lines of the Trouille made his effort hopeless, and the place surrendered on October 18.

The cabal against Marlborough assigned two not altogether consistent reasons for the pushing on of this bloody battle. One was that the general wished to make his own reputation, the other that it was a 'political battle,' fought to get the Whig ministry out of their difficulties. It is rather an unlucky coincidence that a loan, which had been refused before the battle, was actually granted afterwards. As for the mere charge of vanity, it is not easily sustainable, or rather it would apply equally to all commanders at all times, whenever they have fought a bloody battle under disadvantageous circumstances. It may, however, be observed that Marlborough's own remarks about this battle are rather despondent than characterised by his usual quiet cheerfulness after victory; that he appears to have been singularly affected by the carnage, and that he represents the battle as especially intended to 'end the war.' It is curious that he says he is pretty well assured that this will be his last battle; and so, though he continued to command for two years longer, and was engaged in many operations of the siege and manœuvring kind, it was. Malplaquet was the last of the four great engagements which give Marlborough's name an unique position in the roll of generals.

The blood of Malplaquet did not bring about peace, and when peace came it was in a manner very disagreeable to Marlborough and fatal to his own career. The final rupture between the Queen and the Duchess, the fall of Marlborough's ministerial friends, and the other

incidents of what may be called the Home campaign, will be dealt with separately and elsewhere. It is sufficient here to say, that though Marlborough was of course on very different terms with the Tory ministry from those on which he was with his friend Godolphin and his son-in-law Sunderland, it is difficult to discover, even from the narratives of those most devoted to him, that he had any serious reason to complain of Harley and St. John while he remained at the head of the army. That something like a plot was formed to deprive him of his command, and that the charges against him would never have been urged as they actually were urged, except with a deliberate purpose of getting rid of him, is very true. But it is no less true that Marlborough, however he may have wished for a peace concluded by his own friends and on his own terms, was an obstacle, and as long as he was at the head of the army an insuperable obstacle, to the conclusion of a peace between a Tory ministry and Louis XIV. It is also true that though his last two campaigns showed no lack of military genius (there is some ground for the claims of his partisans that his last or tenth campaign, that of 1711, was among the most brilliant he ever fought in a purely military view), no one who looks at their results, can wonder that men to whom the affairs of England were committed should have thought that the game was hardly worth the candle. Indeed the whole series of these events looks as if the Dutch appetite for a 'barrier,' or the mere routine habit of attacking and taking towns, had blinded Marlborough to the impolicy of what Lord Poulett afterwards bluntly called 'knocking his men's heads against stone walls.'

In 1710, though Marlborough and Eugene were working together with a vast army, and though for half the year at least the Whigs were still in power, the capture of Douay, Bethune, Aire, and St. Venant, at a great cost of men, alone rewarded the allies, while the indefatigable industry of Villars constructed an interior line of defence more formidable than ever. In 1711, in a complicated series of operations round Arras, Marlborough, who was now alone, Eugene having been recalled to Vienna, completely outgeneralled Villars, and broke through his lines. But he did not fight, and the sole result of the campaign was the capture of Bouchain at the cost of some sixteen thousand men, while no serious impression was made on the French system of defence. The fact simply was, that with the general communications of European countries in the state which they were at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was either physically impossible to break through such defences as the fortresses of Artois and Picardy then presented, or else it demanded, as has been suggested in a former chapter, the authority of an autocratic monarch and the genius of a great general rolled into one. It has been said that the capture of Bouchain, a second-rate fortress, cost the allies 16,000 men; Lille had cost 14,000; Tournay a number not exactly mentioned, but very large; the petty place of Aire 7,000. How many, malcontent Englishmen might well ask themselves, would it cost before Arras, Cambrai, Hesdin, Calais, Namur, and all the rest of the fortresses that studded the country, could be expected to fall? In the 'short views' that historians are obliged to give, and readers of history to take, the effect of these tedious, bloody,

costly, and unprofitable campaigns on the public temper is too often overlooked; as well as the fact that Marlborough had himself, so to speak, spoilt his audience. He had given them four great victories in little more than five years; it was perhaps unreasonable, but certainly not unnatural, that they should grow fretful when he gave them none during nearly half the same time. Add to this, that the war in Spain had been carried on with almost uniform ill-success for years, that the operations in Italy and on the Rhine had never produced any effect, and that the expense of the war was frightening men of all classes in England, and, independently of the more strictly political considerations which will be entered upon in a few pages, it will be seen that there was some reason for wishing Marlborough anywhere but on or near the field of battle. He was got rid of none too honourably; restrictions were put upon his successor Ormond, which were none too honourable either; and when Villars, freed from his invincible antagonist, had inflicted a sharp defeat upon Eugene at Denain, the military situation was changed from one very much in favour of the allies to one slightly against them, and so contributed beyond all doubt to bring about the Peace of Utrecht.

That peace has for many years had little quarter from English historians of any shade of politics. The omission to obtain guarantees for the Catalans, who had valiantly supported the allies against Philip, is indeed indefensible. But the advantages gained by England were very solid, and I am myself unable to understand how anyone who examines the facts can possibly hold that it was the interest of this country to

continue the war. It had had originally on England's part one main object—to break the intolerable and overbearing power of France, and two subsidiary objects—to prevent that power from being used to incorporate France with Spain, or to force a restoration of the Stuarts against the will of the English people. All these objects had been achieved, and achieved for some time, or rather two had been achieved and one had ceased to be important. The elevation of Charles of Austria to the Imperial throne made it impossible that England, with any sense or reason, should fight to prevent France from acquiring Spain in order that Austria should acquire it, even if experience had not shown the practical impossibility of imposing a king upon the Spaniards against their will. The French power was completely broken for attack, though it was still formidable for defence. I know that this proposition is sometimes denied, but I am quite certain that it is not denied by anyone who is intimately acquainted with the history of France during the 18th century. Properly speaking, France never recovered from the financial difficulties into which this war plunged her, till the Revolution enabled her to commit bankruptcy and begin afresh. Neither did the French army ever during the century recover the blows dealt to its prestige by Marlborough, till in the same way the Revolution broke it up and gave it a fresh start. Yet more, the misery of the French peasantry, which went on increasing during the whole age, dates from this period. So does the loss of popular respect of the French nobles, who, as Villars and others bitterly complain, shirked the service as soon as it became toilsome, dangerous, and

rarely honourable or profitable. All the seeds of the decay of France, which during the following eighty years handed over her colonies to England, were sown by this war. It would have been more honourable to England, doubtless, if it had ended when the campaign of Oudenarde ended, than after the almost disloyal inaction of Ormond and the defeat of Denain. But its real work as a war, the rendering it impossible that France, until some total transformation had come on her people and institutions, should tyrannise over Europe, had been done and done thoroughly even before the first negotiations for peace.

There was also another and an almost stronger reason for peace, which is sometimes denied, but to which Marlborough himself, had he chosen, could have given the strongest testimony. It had been obvious for years there was absolutely no community of interest between the allies, except in the one point of reducing the power of France. Already the tendency on the part of the continental powers to make England fight for all and pay for all had clearly displayed itself; and, brief as the foregoing account of Marlborough's campaigns has necessarily been, abundant instances have been given of the obstacles which the slowness and timidity of the Dutch, the questionable faith and ill-organised resources of the Emperor, and the incurable jealousies and self-seeking of the minor German princes, had thrown in the way. Nor was mere hindrance in warlike operations the chief thing that had to be dreaded. Did a great success occur, then, as was seen after Ramillies, the jarring interests of the States and the Empire were certain to quarrel over the booty and

waste the moments of victory. It may be thought strange that any Powers should have acquiesced in the prolonging of a desperate war. But the German States from the Empire downward, relying not at all on trade, greedy of subsidies, and accustomed for centuries to draw willing recruits from a poor and warlike population, gained something and lost hardly anything by war, while the continuance of it freed them from the perpetual terror of French aggression under which for an entire century they had suffered. Holland had, indeed, more to lose and was herself a paymaster. But to the Dutch, drawing most of their revenue from colonies and trade, war was not very burdensome provided that they were assured of safety at home, which they could never be so well as when protected by the alliance of England and the Empire. Moreover, the Dutch had a kind of traditional cause of quarrel with France, and a very excusable one, on account of the unprovoked aggressions of Louis XIV. in the earlier years of his reign, while their darling ambition, a strong 'barrier,' could hardly be attained except at the cost of the Emperor. All these things made it very unlikely that peace would come speedily if it were left to the High Allies, and though the suspicions which the Tory pamphleteers hinted, of equal readiness on the part of the Dutch and the Emperor to make separate peace if they could, may not have been justified in fact, there was quite enough ground in the known history of the past for not dismissing the suggestion as wholly unlikely. To sum up, the manner of the Peace of Utrecht was objectionable, and some of its omissions were almost more so. But it obtained very solid advantages

for England, including a permanent hold on the Mediterranean and the opening of the South American trade, and, above all, it put an end to English participation in a bloody and costly war, from which there was little prospect of escape otherwise, and which had ceased to be either necessary or profitable for the country. It is difficult to see what further advantages of the territorial kind could have been obtained; for England was not at the moment ready to occupy large tracts of colony. The thirty years of peace obtained by the treaty of Utrecht gave her time to get into such readiness, and thus the treaty itself, not immediately but far from indirectly, led to the wonderful acquisitions of territory which, after the cessation of the 'Pax Walpoliana,' made her mistress of America and India and the strongest power in the world. To Marlborough himself this was in great part owing, but like a great many other excellent and even consummate craftsmen, Marlborough did not quite understand that there is a time for ceasing to exercise as well as a time for exercising even the noblest crafts.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARLBOROUGH AS DIPLOMATIST.

In order not to interrupt the continuous account of the actual military occupations in which Marlborough was engaged, it has been thought well to make in the last three chapters only scanty and passing references to his diplomatic employments, and to leave them, as well as his share in home politics and home intrigues, for treatment in the same way separate and continuous. Unlike the general run of commanders, but perhaps like most of the greatest, Marlborough was a diplomatist of the very first rank. His combination of grasp and penetration of view, the singular suavity of his manners, his unrivalled command of temper, and the mixture of tenacity and suppleness which enabled him to wait for the favourable moment by which his keenness of sight and promptitude of action were sure to profit: these things supplied him with all the equipment of a diplomatist of the first class. Nor did he want experience. He had, as has been seen, acted in negotiations between Charles and James, between James and the French king, between William and the copartners in the Grand Alliance, before the death of William and the accession of Anne gave him still

wider scope for displaying his talents in this direction. His services at the close of the last reign especially fitted him for continuing them under Anne, and it can hardly be said that at any time, until the expulsion of his friends from power deprived him of the confidence of the Home Government, he was entirely free from diplomatic work. When he had nothing else of the kind to do, Dutch deputies and recalcitrant Imperialist generals took good care that his powers of negotiation should not rust.

A minute history of his diplomacy is, however, no more possible here than a minute history of his tactics, and, as before, we must seize only those points which chiefly show his character and abilities in this particular function. The incidents, or series of incidents, which may be selected, both for this purpose and as most important in themselves, are his tour to the German capitals in the winter succeeding Blenheim, the similar tour a year later, the visit to Charles XII. in 1707, and the negotiations with Torcy in the two following years.

These were the chief instances in which he was engaged in personal diplomacy. As far as negotiation by letter and by subordinate agents went, all the negotiations of 1702–1709 passed, directly or indirectly, through his hands. His real power both as general and as favourite was exaggerated by continental ignorance of the English parliamentary system; and almost every quarrel or suit of importance from Stockholm, through Berlin and Warsaw to Vienna and Pesth, from Vienna and Pesth, through Turin to Lisbon and Madrid, in some way or other engaged

Marlborough's attention. It is in this, even more than in the importance of the armies which he commanded, that his unique position among generals, and especially among English generals, consists.

The first occasion, however, which presented itself for his personal diplomacy elsewhere than at the Hague, was in the winter after Blenheim. The Duke of Savoy was very hard pressed, and it was not at all clear how aid was to be sent him. The Emperor would not, perhaps could not; Marlborough's own troops were limited by treaty to Germany and the Netherlands as campaigning grounds. The newly made king of Prussia, however, had begun the policy, never afterwards abandoned by his family, of keeping a considerable army on foot. He was known to be very accessible to judicious flattery, and it was thought possible that a contingent might be got out of him by personal application. Accordingly on November 15, Marlborough set out from Landau with many groans as to the hardships of the winter journey. He reached Berlin in a week, set to work at once and was completely successful, though the king was at variance with the Dutch about the Orange inheritance, and though the war between Sweden and Poland—both Prussia's nearest neighbours—might have served as something more than a pretext for refusal. He finished the business in less than a week.

A year later he took a more extensive diplomatic tour, in which he visited nearly all the German courts of any mark except that of Bavaria, which his own victories had for the time deprived of importance. He began with the Elector Palatine, then went to his old colleague and

almost enemy, Louis of Baden, made his way to Vienna, hurried thence to Berlin, where he succeeded, not without difficulty, in putting Frederick William the Expensive into good humour, and averting the threatened recall of his contingents, soothed at Hanover the wrath of the Electoral family, who were equally angry with Whigs and Tories for opposing a project of inviting the Electress Sophia to England, and so made his way to the Hague. These tours might have been very advantageously repeated every year, had not domestic politics and domestic squabbles called Marlborough off from work for which he was much better fitted.

The most curious and interesting of Marlborough's diplomatic commissions was, however, undertaken in the spring of 1707, and the object of it was Charles XII. of Sweden. Not only was the meeting between two such famous and so strangely contrasted generals of itself interesting, but the circumstances made it still more so. Charles, it is hardly necessary to say, was very much of a comet in the European system. In fact he spent his energies on the impregnable mass of the Russian Empire, on Poland (which was fast becoming the cypher in European politics which a few more years made it), and on his own subjects. But he was perfectly capable of dashing into the west instead of into the east, and such a dash would have interfered sorely with the projects of the allies. Sweden and France had been, on the whole, in friendly relations since the time of Gustavus Adolphus, and though Charles professed great zeal for 'the Protestant religion,' his chivalrous or whimsical temper, whichever adjective may be pre-

ferred, had been struck by the misfortunes of the Elector of Bavaria to such an extent that he was believed to be meditating his restoration and perhaps also the support of the Hungarians against Austria. No one who knows the character of the two generals and has considered their exploits, can doubt that if Charles had executed his design and had met Marlborough in arms instead of in amity, blushing glory would have had to hide Pultowa's day considerably earlier than she actually did. But the actual struggle with France was too equal for any prudent statesman or general to wish further weight cast in the French scale. Besides, the imagination of the period had been so strongly struck with Charles's actual achievements, that he no doubt seemed a much more formidable enemy than he was. So, after preparing the way by bribing those of his ministers who had not been already bribed by the French, and perhaps some who had, it seemed good that Marlborough should visit Saxony, where Charles then was in person. It is said that the king declared he would treat with no one but Marlborough, and as he was undoubtedly curious to meet him and could not well make the advance himself, it is very likely.

Marlborough journeyed by the Hague and Hanover to Altranstadt, where the Swedes were encamped, and arrived there on the night of Monday, April 24. He put himself under the charge of Count Piper, the principal pensioned minister, and was introduced to the king next day. His reported address might, in more modern times, have been thought fulsome—and certainly Marlborough never hesitated at flattery when

he thought it advisable. But it does not seem to be much if at all beyond what the customs of the time authorised in addresses to monarchs, and it was perfectly well known that Charles was at least as fond of flattery as of glory. The reply was gracious, though slightly braggart, and after dining with the king, Marlborough was summoned to a private interview.

The accounts of this celebrated interview, which are given by Voltaire, the nearest writer of eminence to the time, and those which Archdeacon Coxe has elaborated from the very few documents and from other contemporary accounts, differ in a manner even more striking than usual. Both are favourable to Marlborough's diplomatic dexterity; indeed that dexterity has had few more lavish eulogists than Voltaire, who calls the English general roundly 'the cleverest diplomatist of his time.' But they differ remarkably as to the particular fashion in which that dexterity was exercised. According to Voltaire, Piper received no money at all; but though he invokes Sarah as his authority, this can be of no weight as against Marlborough's statements in his letters to Godolphin. In the same way, Voltaire's assertion that Marlborough made no definite proposals to the king, is quite inconsistent with the certain fact that he held out to Charles the prospect of mediating between France and the allies, and with the difficulty he had in preventing Charles from insisting on the execution of the religious part of the Treaty of Westphalia. Yet, again, Voltaire says that the negotiations were chiefly carried on through Goertz, not Piper; and here Marlborough himself again contradicts him. What is less easy of

decision is whether or no Charles, as Voltaire reports, thought Marlborough's appearance too *point-de-vice* for a general. He was very likely to do this, for he was himself, as is well known, a confirmed sloven.

But what is certain is that none of the designs hostile to the allies which had been talked of were carried out, and that Charles abstained, not merely from actively supporting France or Bavaria, but from pushing his own petty, but all the more obstinately cherished grievances against the Emperor. So that the ambassador certainly succeeded in his mission, whatever were the particular means of success which he used. It is, moreover, justly claimed for Marlborough, that he managed two extremely delicate pieces of business—his relations with the discomfited Augustus of Saxony, and with Augustus's temporarily successful rival Stanislaus Leczinski—without giving any offence to a prince so almost insanely ready to take offence as Charles.

He finished this difficult matter with another visit to the king of Prussia, and that expensive Herr presented him with a diamond ring worth a thousand pounds, which it is quite certain Marlborough did not fail to estimate at its proper value.

The last important diplomatic negotiations in which Marlborough was concerned contrast remarkably with the earlier. They were the long and complicated hagglings for peace with the French which lasted from the winter of 1708 till the definite refusal of Louis to make war upon his own grandson at the Congress of Gertruydenberg. Nothing, it is known, came of these negotiations; unless it may be said that the readiness of the Tory Ministry to accept comparatively less

favourable terms at Utrecht came of them. It cannot be said that the appearance which Marlborough presents in these matters is altogether favourable. That public opinion charged him with contributing to the insistence on impossible terms, and with thus endeavouring to keep up the war, is well known, and I cannot say that either his own or his advocates' defence appears to me satisfactory. The faithful Coxe will have it that Marlborough was a mere mouthpiece of the Whig Ministry; that he had nothing to do with the decisions of the Cabinet, and that whether or no he was sincerely as anxious for peace as he himself pretends, he was only a channel and an instrument in the proceedings which kept up the war. This, it is hardly necessary to remark to anyone who has the faculty of estimating evidence, will not do. In the first place, the presence of Godolphin in the Ministry practically made Marlborough as responsible for its decisions as if he himself had held a post in the Cabinet. In the second place, the Whig Ministry itself was Marlborough's own creature. Without him and his wife, the Coalition or moderate Tory Government of the Queen's first years would never have been broken up. Without him the pure Whig Government which succeeded could not have remained a day in office. More than all this, Marlborough, putting his backstairs influence entirely aside, had a method of directing the peace or war decisions of the Cabinet which was quite final. His resignation would have made it impossible for the most desperate hater of wooden shoes and warming-pans to carry on the war for three months. This being so, it is perfectly useless to uphold Marl-

borough as a humble servant of his country and his country's ministers, who did nothing for peace because it was not within his power or his province to do anything. It is quite open to anyone to contend that he honestly thought the prosecution of the war the best thing for England. The celebrated delusion of M. Josse is by no means always a consciously corrupt or interested delusion; it is sometimes a delusion quite independent of any interested or corrupt motives, conscious or unconscious. From a very young man, Marlborough had seen France the arbiter and the tyrant of continental Europe. Few people knew better than he how she had been for years the arbiter and had nearly been the tyrant of England. Not a man living probably knew so well how unstable was the alliance which was gradually forcing her to her knees, and how difficult it might be if that alliance were once dissolved to get its members together again. It will perhaps seem that if Marlborough did wrong here (and he probably did), he did it, if not with a totally honest intention, at any rate with reasons to appeal to which might have sufficed for a totally honest intention. But to represent him as a mere helpless Spenlow, the unwilling instrument of such Jorkinses as Godolphin, Sunderland, Russell, and the rest, is really childish; and it must be taken as one of the numerous proofs that Archdeacon Coxe, with an industry in perusing, and a sagacity in selecting historical documents which have not been equalled by far more pretentious historians, either had no knowledge of human nature and the force of evidence at all, or was so completely under the dominion of the idea that a biographer must

defend his hero at all hazards, that he did not attempt to exercise his faculty of judgment.

If, however, Marlborough erred in these negotiations, it is fair to remember that the jarring interests which he had to recognise, and if possible reconcile, were so irreconcilable that his successors only got rid of them by ignoring them altogether, and practically making a separate peace. He was punished very curiously in kind. After the downfall of his friends in 1710 he had no further control of diplomatic affairs whatever, and it is quite clear that he felt this very bitterly. Some, indeed, of his expressions to Bolingbroke, while he still continued in command, are hardly dignified, and nothing seems to have galled him more than that he, who for nearly nine years had practically controlled the diplomacy of England, and had carried on great part of it through his private agents, should now be left out in the cold and in ignorance of what was going on behind his back.

The extent of his diplomacy is simply wonderful, and, as has been said, can at best be generally described, not given by sample and detail here. In a war which was only less universal than the great war which succeeded it three quarters of a century later; a war which engaged every country from Shetland to Lisbon, from the utmost Spanish and French capes of the west to the borders of Turkey, nothing during these years was done without Marlborough's privity and advice. He had not merely that which came upon him daily: the care of mollifying the Dutch States and deputies; of coaxing sulky or half-hearted imperialist generals; of keeping the minor kings and princes of

the Empire in good humour; of controlling the financial affairs of the subsidised troops in Germany; he had even to keep the Italian war steadily under his eye; to advise (though not often with much effect) on the affairs of Spain, and to suggest (though again without much success) descents on the French coasts to distract the attention of the enemy. He maintained, it would seem (and there is at least fair ground for accepting his plea that the too famous bread money was mainly, if not wholly, devoted to this purpose), a complete intelligence system of his own (not a few documents respecting which are still extant) at nearly all the capitals, camps, and head-quarters in Europe. He was also generally in direct communication—though, as may be supposed, this communication was not unfrequently interrupted by jealousy—with all the chief English ambassadors and envoys ordinary and extraordinary on the Continent. Except in the case of Napoleon, there is absolutely no instance of work so multifarious and crushing being laid on a single man; and Marlborough had, of course, greatly the disadvantage of Napoleon, both in respect of irresponsibility and of means in men and money to carry out his plans. It would not be true to say that he discharged this heavy load of work (to which, it must be remembered, had to be added his voluminous private correspondence with the Duchess and Godolphin, and a participation in home politics nearly as active as if he had been a peer at home with nothing to do but to go to his office for an hour or two, and to the House of Lords for an hour or two more) altogether without suffering. He was not young, nor even in early middle life, when it began; and there can be very little

doubt that the enormous intellectual labour of these years, unrelieved except by bodily labour no less severe when he was in the field, had something to do with the failure of intellectual vigour which came upon him in his last days. It is a common complaint in his private letters that 'his head is so hot,' that 'his blood is in a fever,' and the like. But he never, in all the years of his command, seems to have failed in the punctual discharge of whatever work came upon him; and, until the failure (if, indeed, it was not an intended failure) of Gertruydenberg, he was as invariably successful in his diplomatic as in his military work, and as little demonstrative over his successes. Thackeray, who was certainly less than just to him on the whole, has remarked on the unique calm and almost humility with which he records the most splendid victories; and this is equally characteristic of his accounts of his negotiations. There is nothing of the pride that apes humility about this; nothing of the depreciation which is intended merely to extort praise. There is no scorn of others; not even any apparent delight in talking about himself. Although there are, as has been more than once noticed, flashes of humour and pungency, they seem to be rather avoided than sought. But, on the other hand, there is no jejuneness or brevity. He takes as much pains to make his correspondent clearly understand what he has done as he takes little to impress on him that it is he, Marlborough, who has done it. It is to be regretted that partly the bodily exhaustion of the day's work, and partly the dislike just noticed of bragging, seems to have prevented him from giving anyone familiar detailed accounts of his own great victories, for

the exceptional clearness of his style would have made them of the first value.[1]

[1] It has occurred to me that it may be interesting to the reader to have Marlborough's first accounts of his four great victories placed in juxtaposition. They are as follows:—

BLENHEIM—*to* SARAH, *and written on the back of a Bill, or Commissariat form.*

Aug. 13, 1704.—I have not the time to say more, but to beg you will give my duty to the Queen and let her know her army has had a glorious victory. M. Tallard and two other generals are in my coach, and I am following the rest. The bearer, my aide-de-camp, Colonel Parke, will give her an account of what has passed. I shall do it in a day or two by another more at large.—MARLBOROUGH.

RAMILLIES—*to* SARAH, *with a somewhat longer one to* GODOLPHIN. (*The official dispatch had been sent the night before.*)

Monday, May 24th, 11 *o'clock.*—I did not tell my dearest soul in my last the design I had of engaging the enemy if possible to a battle, fearing the concern she has for me might make her uneasy: but I can now give her the satisfaction of letting her know that on Sunday last we fought, and that God Almighty has been pleased to give us a victory. I must leave the particulars to this bearer, Colonel Richards, for having been on horseback all Sunday, and after the battle marching all night, my head aches to that degree that it is very uneasy for me to write; poor Bingfield, holding my stirrup for me and helping me on horseback, was killed. I am told that he leaves his wife and mother in a poor condition. I can't write to any of my children, so that you will let them know I am well, and that I desire they will thank God for preserving me. And pray give my duty to the Queen and let her know the truth of my heart, that the greatest pleasure I have in this success is that it may be a great service to her affairs: for I am sincerely sensible of all her goodness to me and mine. Pray believe me when I assure you that I love you more than I can express.'

OUDENARDE—*to* SARAH, *with, as usual, another and rather longer to* GODOLPHIN.

July 12.—I have neither spirits (*the* GODOLPHIN *letter says his head* 'aches terribly') nor time to answer your three last letters, this

All these gifts found at least as appropriate employment abroad in diplomacy as in war. It is only to be regretted that they had to be employed so largely on the petty and often discreditable intrigues at home, which will be described in the next chapter.

being to bring the good news of a battle we had yesterday, in which it pleased God to give us at last the advantage. Our foot on both sides having been all engaged has occasioned much blood: but I thank God the English have suffered less than any of the other troops—none of our English horse having been engaged. I do, and you must, give thanks to God for His goodness in protecting and making me the instrument of so much happiness to the Queen and nation, if she will please to make use of it.

MALPLAQUET—*a postscript to* SARAH, *added to a letter written the day before the fight.*

September 11.—I am so tired that I have but strength enough to tell you that we have had this day a very bloody battle: the first part of the day we beat their foot and afterwards their horse. God Almighty be praised, it is now in our power to have what peace we please, and I may be pretty well assured of never being in another battle: but that nor nothing in this world can make me happy if you are not kind.'

CHAPTER IX.

DOMESTIC AND POLITICAL ATTITUDE DURING PERIOD OF GENERALSHIP.

It may seem strange to some readers that the entire relations of Marlborough to home policy, touching as they do on matters which have had to themselves hundreds of volumes for treatment, should here be consigned to a single if a long chapter. The reason, however, is a simple one. It is that the events here to be recorded, though they exercised a momentous influence on Marlborough's career, were really to a very small extent in Marlborough's direct guidance. He made, as has been seen, flitting visits to England each winter, sometimes when Parliament was not sitting. He profited at first, immensely, by his wife's influence over the queen; he suffered almost more immensely, in the proper meaning of the word, from the abuse and the loss of that influence. The extraordinary accident of his possessing in Godolphin a kind of alter ego gifted with statesmanship maintained his credit longer, no doubt, than it could otherwise have been maintained. During the whole time he gave much, and generally good advice to his colleagues. He profited by the moderate Tory party as long as he could, advised and upheld the

expedient of a coalition between the moderate Tories and moderate Whigs, availed himself of the Whig party pure and simple when the coalition broke down, and for a time, at any rate, served without rebelling a pure Tory Ministry, after the Whigs had thrown away their chance. But the feeling which is uppermost in the minds of most impartial and tolerably qualified readers of the annals of the time must be, I think, that Marlborough was not at the height of the political situation as he was at the height of the military. He could not, distant as he was from England, and absorbed for the most part in other business, fully appreciate the advance which the party system in the House of Commons was making under a female sovereign of little vigour and a set of Ministers who were much more intriguers than statesmen. He did not perceive, and it was nearly impossible for him to perceive, that while in his earlier days it had been a question how parties in Parliament could rise to power by attaching themselves to this or that claimant of the throne—to James, to Monmouth, to William—the question now was, what claimant to the throne could win or hold it by attaching himself to this or that party? He began and continued at the wrong end of the machine, and the downward history of his parliamentary influence, which he finally lost, as I have no doubt, from double-dealing during his absence on the Continent in the last two years of Queen Anne's reign, is due to this. He did not see that, in the fourfold change above detailed, he was gradually losing grasp of the only lever which remained to an English statesman. That conviction no less than interest kept him to the side of 'the

Protestant religion' and the anti-Gallican crusade, I for one have no doubt. But he never seems to have fully realised that after the Revolution the ultimate power had passed from the Court to the polling-booths, and that at these latter the battle had really to be fought. I think that the war of the Spanish Succession, at least after Oudenarde, was a bad war for England; I think that the peace of Utrecht was a good peace for England. But Marlborough was quite entitled to hold the opposite view. The fault of his conduct—a fault which in a man of such exceptional power of intellect must be attributed at least partly to his distance from the scene of action—was in mistaking not so much his ends as his means.

Among those means his wife has, perhaps, had an undue place assigned her by history. Clio has always had a feminine turn for scandal, and in no instance has it pleased her to assign so much influence to the *camarilla* as in this reign of Queen Anne. Sarah Marlborough and Abigail Masham occupy in all histories of the time what appears to me a wholly disproportionate place. That they had no influence, or small influence, no one but a fool would say: that their influence accomplished by itself anything like the changes of these ten years I do most sturdily deny. Towards the end of William III.'s reign the English nation sickened of its Dutch deliverer without exactly yearning for its exiled tyrant. Anne, and Anne's favourite ministers, Marlborough, Nottingham, Godolphin, exactly met its wishes, and Marlborough's pugnacity met them likewise. But the Tory 'tail' proved itself factious and incapable, and by degrees public confidence turned to the Whigs, aided

a little by Whig electioneering. The Whigs proved themselves more tyrannical and more incompetent than the Tories, while their place-hunting disgusted the country. The crowning folly of the Sacheverell prosecution put them out of favour, and a Tory Ministry came in to end the war of which the nation was tired, and, if it had not blundered (fortunately or not, who can tell?), to restore the dynasty which, if it only would have behaved decently, the nation warmly and rightly preferred. Sarah and Abigail, perhaps, did something more than sit upon the wheels; they put spokes in them now and then. But that the whole history of Marlborough's downfall and the Treaty of Utrecht resolves itself into the fact that Sarah was an insolent handmaid and Abigail an obliging one, can only be admitted by those who refuse to listen to history unless it represents itself as an historical novel. I am not writing the life of Sarah Jennings, and she will make less appearance here than she has made in any life of her husband. She will appear when it is necessary that she should appear, and not otherwise.

Authorities worthy of respect assert that, as a matter of fact, Lady Marlborough lost her influence with Anne from the date of the latter's succession. If there were no authorities on the subject it would be perfectly easy to accept the fact as true. To admit the kind of domination which Sarah exercised during a difficult and dangerous period of opposition was one thing; to admit it when the dominated person was Queen of England was another. It is probable that, if Lady Marlborough had had the good sense to abstain from dictating to her mistress while utilising that mis-

tress's habitual tendency to spoil and gratify her, she would, in effect, have played a much more effectual part than she actually did. But it is so much human nature to mistake the tenses of favour that one can hardly be very angry with Sarah Marlborough.

The first liberalities of the new queen to her favourites have already been noticed. It was not of less importance to the Marlborough interest that Godolphin was appointed lord treasurer. Neither Marlborough nor Godolphin was a 'high-flying' Tory. But they did not at first attempt, or privately wish, to interfere with the queen's desire for a Tory Ministry, and the Tory colour of the new administration was deepened to such an extent that Montagu, Somers, and Russell were omitted from the list of the Privy Council. Even at this time Lady Marlborough is said to have inclined to the Whigs, it is supposed, because of her daughter's marriage to Sunderland's heir. It is, perhaps, more reasonable to suppose that her engrossing temper found more satisfaction in the prospect of bringing to power a party which, save herself, had no support with the queen than in the concurrence of Tory partisans who were independent of the Marlboroughs, and owed them no thanks. This ruinous folly, to which Marlborough himself gave too much heed, showed itself at the very beginning of the reign; and a letter which has been printed[1] shows the extent to which,

[1] The first paragraph of this letter is well worth giving, as it illustrates Sarah's temper and the way in which she showed it in these political matters. It is dated Margate, Tuesday the 29th May, and is written not to her husband but to Godolphin:—'Since you have been so kind as to write so long a letter for my satisfaction, I hope it will hold out to read my answer, though I know my opinion

before Anne was well seated on the throne, it had attained. But Sarah's dislike of the only party that could really support or really endanger her husband's predominance was for a time confined to minor matters. The elections of the late autumn of 1702 returned a large Tory majority, and the motion, intended to gall the Whigs, that the Earl of Marlborough had 'signally retrieved' the ancient honour of the nation, was carried by a majority of a hundred. Yet even in this mood of the Commons there were abundant evidences of the impatience with which anything like a favourite as such has always, and rightly, been regarded by the English nation. The attempt to make Marlborough's pension (of 5,000*l.* upon the Post Office, which was conferred at the same time as the dukedom on December 14, 1702) perpetual and hereditary raised decided opposition, and while it probably increased the Duchess's antipathy to the Tories it ought to have shown her the folly of attempting to dictate to the House of Commons. It was not till after Ramillies that the pension was made perpetual by Act of Parliament, and that Woodstock and Blenheim, which after the battle of that name

is very insignificant upon most occasions. (*It is good to look at Sarah's portrait and imagine the toss of the head with which this must have been written.*) In the first place I will begin without any compliment, and say that if anything would give me a worse thought of the meetings of those gentlemen (*the Tories*) than I had before it would be their desire to turn any man out of an employment to put in my Lord Sandwich. This looks to me as if everything were to be governed by faction and nonsense: and 'tis no matter what look things have in the world, or what men are made use of, if they are but such creatures as will, right or wrong, be at the disposal of two or three arbitrary men that are at the head of them. &c. &c.

were presented to Marlborough by the queen in accordance with an address of the Commons, were entailed with the dukedom on the female as well as the male heirs of his body. Marlborough himself was as yet an undoubted Tory, and he took a considerable part in the ill-omened Bill against Occasional Conformity, which for years was the chief bone of contention between the two parties.

The first real breach between Marlborough and the Tory party was certainly due to the fault of the party. Its chief leaders, Rochester and Nottingham, were ill inclined to the Churchills: the former being the queen's uncle, and as such jealous of their influence; the latter as a politician of unblemished integrity, though not very great ability, who held by the traditional principles of Toryism. These principles were unquestionably adverse to foreign connections, a standing army, and a French war. Not merely Rochester and Nottingham, but Buckinghamshire (Mulgrave), and Jersey in the House of Lords, and Hedges and Seymour in the House of Commons, were adverse to the war. Sarah was at once for coalescing with the Whigs, and it would appear that Godolphin, upon whom party principles always sat very loose, agreed with her. But Marlborough himself entertained, at any rate for a time, a juster view of the situation. In his letters[1] he more than once

[1] Proper names in these letters were often in cypher, but can generally be identified. The well-known nicknames of Anne and her friends sometimes also appear. I do not know whether it is more impertinent to remind the reader or more remiss not to remind him, that in this nomenclature Anne was *Mrs. Morley;* Prince George, *Mr. Morley;* Marlborough, *Mr. Freeman;* Sarah, *Mrs. Freeman;* and Godolphin, *Mr. Montgomery.*

expresses the undoubtedly sound opinion that no single party could be trusted, but he does not seem to have fully realised the fact. He was, however, at this time on good terms with Harley, the Speaker, whose parliamentary influence was very great; and he appears to have been guided by Harley in declining, during the whole course of 1703, to break with the ultra-Tories. In the next year, however, partly by manœuvring and partly by exertion of influence, the main Tory obstructives were got rid of. Harley succeeded Nottingham as Secretary of State, and by Marlborough's special influence Henry St. John was made Secretary of War, but no extreme Whigs were admitted to the Cabinet. It was under this Ministry that Blenheim was fought, and it was, on the whole, the most satisfactory that Marlborough had to do with.

It was not altogether by his own fault that it came to an end. In the winter of 1704 the extreme Tory party attempted one of those violent and unconstitutional proceedings which distinguished the party tactics of both parties from the Exclusion Bill to the Septennial Act. They proposed to tack the Occasional Conformity Bill to the Bill granting the Land Tax, on which the subsidy promised by Marlborough to the King of Prussia was chargeable. This outrageous measure was defeated by a very large majority, Harley and the moderate Tories voting against it. But Marlborough and Godolphin, when the Occasional Conformity Bill by itself reached the Lords, changed their former policy and voted against it, thus declaring war against the Tory party. The Bill itself finds few, if any, defenders now; but it may be asked with some

pertinence what change in it or in the situation had occurred to make Marlborough oppose what he formerly supported? Indeed, the whole history of Marlborough's connection with this measure is a typical instance of his unfortunate, and not much more intelligent than fortunate, opportunism in these years, when he only saw part of politics, and was obliged to see the rest through the spectacles of his wife's temper, Sunderland's party spirit, and Godolphin's habit of clinging to power. Occasional Conformity—that is to say, compliance with the Test and Corporation Acts on the occasions required by law and on those only—was undoubtedly something of a scandal, and unfortunately it touched the pockets and the ambition as well as the consciences of Churchmen by allowing Nonconformists to use 'the office key, the picklock to a place,' which otherwise they themselves could alone have applied. Moreover, all the Dissenters who thus sneaked into place were more or less Whiggish, and so party zeal complicated religious zeal and the not less ardent zeal of greed. Accordingly nothing was more at the heart of the extremer Tory party than the Bill rendering Occasional Conformity illegal and penal. Marlborough was at first strong for the measure in 1702, when it would have passed had not the Lords (who were Whiggish) introduced amendments which the Commons would not accept. In 1703 we find him, with some surprise, writing to his wife: 'I am firmly resolved never to assist any Jacobite whatsoever or any Tory that is for persecution'; and that as he has, by arguments not mentioned, persuaded himself that the high Tories wish him to vote against it, he will not do so, but that at the same time he will not speak

for it. He did not, and accordingly the Bill was lost, whereupon he and Godolphin formally protested against its rejection—an ingeniously crooked policy which seems to have deceived nobody. What happened a year later has been mentioned already, and the only thing to be said for Marlborough and Godolphin is that they had the grace neither to support vote with voice, nor, as has been seen since their time, to speak in one sense and vote in another.

The Whig party which, though in a minority and in opposition, was united, knew its own mind, and was ably led by the so-called Junta, would have been more or less than human if it had not endeavoured to profit by the disunion of its adversaries, and if it had been content to keep a moderate Tory Government in office by siding with it against the ultras. No one of its leaders was indeed a statesman as Marlborough, as Godolphin, or as, on its own side, Walpole was a statesman. Somers was an able lawyer, who, like other able lawyers, knew the value of fidelity to party; Wharton was a profligate man of parts, to whom politics were another kind of Newmarket, and with whom electioneering was a special passion; Halifax was a clever financier; Orford a representative of the theory that England ought to be governed by and in the interest of a limited number of Whig families; Sunderland a sincere partisan of the bitterest type. But everyone of the five was of ability above the average, and everyone was determined that the Whig party should triumph. They proceeded with sufficient dexterity by at first merely demanding a share, and a subordinate share, in the offices of government. This,

with the crude ideas of the time as to party government, could hardly be denied them, and by degrees, without a declaration of war, Walpole, Cowper, and others were introduced. Marlborough's better judgment long resisted the introduction of the hot-headed Sunderland, but the Duchess's partiality for her son-in-law at length prevailed. It is necessary to remember all this when considering the accusations which are liberally brought against Harley for treachery, duplicity, and factiousness in his subsequent action; for, though it was no doubt quite natural of the Whigs to wish not to serve their country for nothing, it can hardly be said to have been unnatural of the moderate Tories to watch with anything but satisfaction the gradual permeation of Government by creatures of Sunderland and Wharton. Marlborough, it is certain, perceived these things, but, not being on the spot, he did not perceive them quite clearly enough; and he is hardly to be blamed when, as he says, 'Upon many occasions I have the spleen, and am weary of my life, for my friends give me much more uneasiness than my enemies.'

His policy for the Parliament of 1705 was a waiting one. He hoped that neither party might have a great majority, so that Crown influence might be able to make itself felt. But that he should have thought this likely shows how little he understood the character of his countrymen, since the expulsion of the direct Stuart line had removed the feeling of paramount loyalty to the sovereign. The Whigs gained greatly in the elections, and they became still more importunate for office. A special struggle was made for the Great Seal, and the indiscreet and indecent partisanship of the

Duchess's letters to the queen is said to have for the first time provoked something like a revolt in Anne. Finally, Marlborough made what was certainly a great blunder. The queen appealed personally to him from his wife and Godolphin, thinking, no doubt, as hitherto she had good reason to think, that he was less of a partisan than either. His reply is couched in guarded and rather indefinite language, but it cannot be interpreted otherwise than as an almost direct recommendation to her to discard the Tories and trust to the Whigs. It marks, indeed, something like a climax in the progress of Marlborough's feelings towards the two parties. Up to this time we have had constant phrases in his letters such as that 'He pretends to be of no party'; 'He knows both too well'; 'He will never enter into party or faction'; 'He would be glad not to enter into the unreasonable reasoning of either party.' In June 1705 the queen had written to him a letter which Coxe justly describes as 'no less gracious than affectionate,' in which she complains naturally enough of the 'unjust, unreasonable things those strange people desire,' and so forth. The answer is very guarded and hints at 'encouragement proper to give to the Whigs,' but it still keeps up the impartial tone. He 'would not have her Majesty in either of the parties' hands,' he thinks Godolphin 'the only man in England capable of giving such advice as may keep her out of the hands of both parties.' But in September, influenced perhaps by the Whig success in the elections, he takes a very different tone. The queen's letter does not appear, but Marlborough's answer, dated Michaelmas day, is plain enough. He refers her to Godolphin (from whom she has

appealed to him), and he tells her that there is nothing else to do except to summon Rochester and Nottingham (the extreme Tory leaders), and let them 'take her business into their hands, the consequences of which are much to be feared.' Such a letter could not fail to shake Anne's confidence in the independence of Marlborough's judgment; and, known as no doubt it soon was to Harley, it could not fail also to make the moderate Tories think seriously as to the wisdom of supporting a statesman whose wife passionately opposed them, and who himself gave them the most lukewarm assistance. For the time, however, Harley himself showed no discontent, and in the fight for the Speaker the Whig candidate Smith, whom he and some of his followers supported, was elected. A Whig speech was also put into the queen's mouth.

Throughout this reign, however, the Tories had a card to play which nearly always won a trick from the opposite side, and they played it now. One of their bitterest representatives in the Lords moved the invitation of the Electress Sophia to England, thereby putting the Whigs in the dilemma of offending the queen, who was vehemently set against such an invitation, or else being false to their own principles and mortifying the House of Hanover. The Whigs chose the latter course, and suffered not a little from it in popular estimation, though the Tories can hardly be said to have gained; indeed, the queen was for a time well affected towards the Whigs, and in the spring of 1706 an apparently definite *rapprochement* took place between the leaders of the latter on the one side and Harley and St. John on the other. As the ultra-Tories

could do nothing by themselves, things looked rosy for the Marlborough-Godolphin system.

The breach of this understanding was due to Whig, not to Tory, action. Godolphin, who was quite as much under the Duchess's influence as her husband, if not more so, pressed upon Anne the substitution of Sunderland, the most acrimonious of all the Whigs, for Hedges as Secretary of State. This appointment, despite her repugnance, for which she gave very good grounds, was urged upon her by all three with the greatest and the most unwise insistence. Finding her still reluctant, they chose to attribute it to Harley. Those who are determined to see in Anne a woman little better than a fool in understanding may possibly derive an argument for Harley's inspiration from the character of the queen's correspondence with her tyrannical ministers. If Harley did inspire that correspondence directly he was an even cleverer person than he is considered by his least severe judges. The tone of it is feminine enough, but the writer has got hold of the main argument which Marlborough had so long pressed upon her—the necessity of the queen's standing aloof from party—and urges it with either very artless or extremely artful skill. 'You press'—she says to Godolphin in the beginning of September 1706, when Marlborough himself was still half-hearted about forcing Sunderland on her—'you press the bringing Lord Sunderland into business that there may be one of that party in a place of trust to help carry on the business this winter; and you think if this is not complied with, they will not be very hearty in pursuing my service in the Parliament, but is it not very hard that men of sense and honour will not pro-

mote the good of their country because everything in the world is not done they desire? . . . . Why, for God's sake, must I who have no interest, no end, no thought, but for the good of my country, be made so miserable as to be brought into the power of one set of men?' And a week or two later (again to Godolphin) 'The making him secretary I can't help thinking is throwing myself into the hands of a party'—which Marlborough and Godolphin had always protested against. This latter letter (of September 21) is long and spirited, and though Godolphin set the Duchess to work and tried himself, he could make little impression on Anne. Then he tried Marlborough, who wrote to the queen one of the (as it seems to me very injudicious) letters, merely saying ditto to Godolphin, which by degrees lost him all credit as a referee. This is the turning-point of the whole history, and it is most important that it should be clearly understood. The correspondence on the subject is voluminous, but the facts do not appear to be in much, if in any, dispute. There is little doubt that Harley did use what influence he possessed to prevent the entrance of Sunderland into the Ministry, but it is impossible to see in this any breach of good faith towards Marlborough and Godolphin. The Ministry was avowedly a coalition Ministry, and no one had been more lavish of hope that it would continue so than Marlborough. It was urged both by Harley, by St. John, and by the queen that the substitution of Sunderland for a Tory, coming on the top of other changes of the same kind, would amount in effect to throwing the whole power into the hands of the Whigs. Against this they certainly had, from the coalition point of view,

a right to protest and to work. To speak of such efforts as 'undermining,' 'striving to draw Marlborough and Godolphin to their party,' and so forth is absurd. Both parties worked, and very properly worked, for their own side; but, independently of this, which justified each, Harley and St. John had the justification that the Whigs were obviously striving to make the Government not a coalition Government at all, but a Government wholly or in preponderant measure Whig. At length the instances of the Marlborough party prevailed, and almost every Tory, except Harley and St. John themselves, was removed from office.

According to modern ideas it was, no doubt, the duty of these two Ministers to resign; but it must be remembered that modern ideas had very little to do with the whole transaction. Theoretically, faith had been broken with, not by, the two Tory leaders, and they doubtless considered themselves perfectly justified in seeking to reply by influence to influence. All the world knows what instrument was chosen, and how Abigail Hill supplanted her cousin Sarah Marlborough, and very amusing the details of the story are. But their results only concern us; and it is pretty certain that if Marlborough had been on the spot the Duchess's silly jealousy would have had far less scope. 'What you say,' he writes in the early days of the battle, 'of Mrs. Masham is very odd, and if you think she is a good weather-cock it is high time to leave off struggling; for, believe me, *nothing is worth rowing for against wind and tide—at least you will think so when you come to my age.*' Abigail was a cousin of Harley as well as of the Duchess; she was undoubtedly a

sincere Tory and High Churchwoman, and she thus was congenial to Anne. The Whigs, moreover, by pursuing their system of monopoly, and even endeavouring to force the queen into making ecclesiastical appointments at their bidding—a point on which, as is well known, she was always very sensitive, so much so as to resist the powerful claim of Swift—deeply offended her. Not content with this, they attacked Marlborough's own brother, George Churchill, who was a staunch Tory. Godolphin, who had very few party inclinations, and was, though not a spotless character, chiefly anxious that the queen's government should be carried on, seems to have been honestly inclined to the Whigs when he found that he could not work with the extreme Tories. But Marlborough, had he been on the spot, would pretty certainly have seen the impossibility of his *via media*. As it was, he played the game surprisingly ill, if it can be considered surprising that a man should play a game ill when he never sees it. The disputes between the Duchess of Marlborough and Mrs. Masham continued, and Harley's so-called intrigues were replied to by intrigues on the other side to get rid of Harley. The more carefully these counterminings are studied the clearer will it become how entirely false it is to represent faction and intrigue as exclusively, or even mainly, on the Tory side.

In short, both Marlborough and Godolphin, but especially the former, seem to have incurred the proverbial fate of those who try to sit on two stools. They lost no opportunity of annoying the Tories, while Marlborough, at any rate, was reluctant to throw himself

entirely on the side of the Whigs. Thus disgusting both parties, they had nothing to depend on but the private favour of the queen, and this Sarah was unceasingly employed in turning into dislike. Marlborough himself is very excusable, for no one is a judge of his own wife's conduct unless he happens to hate her. But it must always be considered surprising that a man of Godolphin's acuteness, constantly on the spot and intimately acquainted with all the parties, should not have seen that the Duchess was far more dangerous than valuable as an instrument.

Indeed, in reading the history of the matter as written by the principal actors, it is impossible not to perceive the immense disadvantage under which Marlborough lay. In one of her letters to him the queen speaks of 'the malice of the Whigs, which you would perceive if you were here.' Malice may be allowed to be question-begging, but the rest of the phrase is undeniably suggestive. Nor can it be denied that in this same letter Anne, or probably Harley, makes a strong point when she says she has 'a resolution to encourage all those that will concur in my service, whether they be Whigs or Tories.' This was Marlborough's own theory, and no one could deny that it had been broken through in the Whig, not the Tory interest. Accordingly his answer to her is, to say the least, awkward, and the simultaneous correspondence with Godolphin, Sunderland, and the Duchess shows that he felt the Whigs to be hard masters. That he should have submitted to them at all is only comprehensible when the rooted dislike of the Tories of those days to a foreign war is remembered—a dislike

senseless enough, and not unjustly punished by their exclusion from office for the best part of the next century.

At last, in the autumn of 1707, both Marlborough and Godolphin determined, as the vulgar phrase is, to have it out with Harley. His answers have again been supposed to show vile duplicity on his part; I own that I cannot see it. There is not the slightest evidence that Harley was unwilling to continue his support to the *via media* policy which Marlborough and Godolphin still professed to represent. That he used Mrs. Masham's interest to counteract the now purely Whig influence of Sarah is perfectly true; but Marlborough's own professions are on record denying his anxiety to promote Whig party interests. If Marlborough did not support those interests, why was Harley treacherous to Marlborough in opposing them? We know, of course, that Marlborough did support those interests, but as this was in direct contravention of his public professions and of the terms and principles on which Harley entered the Ministry, Harley himself was certainly justified in playing a game of diamond cut diamond. Neither side is defensible wholly. Both sides finessed a great deal too deeply for honest play. But if it was permissible for Marlborough, however unwillingly and against his better judgment, to lend a hand constantly to the aggrandisement of the Whigs, how was it unpardonable of Harley to lend a hand constantly to the aggrandisement of the Tories?

It was, however, impossible that this state of things could go on long, and the crisis was precipitated in the winter session of 1707–8 by an ingenious move of

the Whigs, which seems to have been due to Halifax and Wharton. The preceding campaign had been unfortunate, and the losses at sea from privateers had been very great. An attack was planned upon the military and naval conduct of affairs alike, and especially upon Admiral Churchill. The ultra-Tories fell into the trap and joined this, so that Marlborough and Godolphin seem to have been forced, or at least frightened, into throwing themselves into the arms of the Whigs. Anne was at the same time alarmed by the fact that her husband as well as George Churchill was threatened, and for the moment she was at the mercy of the Whigs, reinforced by Marlborough and Godolphin. They availed themselves of the opportunity to get rid of Harley. Some treasonable practices of a clerk of his, named Gregg, were trumped up, the general and the treasurer threatened resignation (Marlborough declaring that 'no consideration can make me serve any longer with that man') and, after a violent struggle the Queen consented to Harley's dismissal; St. John, Mansel, and Harcourt accompanied him. Marlborough had at last burnt his boats and irretrievably committed himself to the Whig party. By that party, as will be seen, he was treated with by no means excessive gratitude, though nothing but his influence brought them into power. But what is certain is, that Harley had up to this time used no influence against Marlborough himself, and that it was Marlborough, not Harley, who put an end to the system of coalition government which had prevailed for five years, and of which Marlborough, not Harley, had been the nominally strenuous advocate.

The Whigs started, at the beginning of 1708, with a great advantage in the shape of a threatened French invasion, which naturally rekindled ill-will to the House of Stuart and strengthened the hands of the party hostile to its claims. But the Peers' address to the Queen (it must be remembered that the Upper House was strongly Whig) was disfigured by a good deal of factiousness, and the Queen was coerced into echoing it in her reply. Anne was not likely to forgive this, especially as the influence of Mrs. Masham continued, while the Duchess took care to augment it by her own unwise persecution of her mistress. The Whigs, too, continued their insatiable grasping at office, and having forced most of their leaders in, now brought forward Somers once more. Anne appealed to Marlborough himself, and once more he committed, as it seems to me, the fatal mistake of not availing himself of the opportunity and supporting what were evidently the Queen's wishes. It was all the more unwise that an opening had just before been given to him for re-establishing something like confidential relations with his sovereign. Anne, despite many disappointments, was apparently loth to give up the idea of Marlborough as an impartial umpire and counsel. In July 1708 the Whigs reverted to the plan of inviting the Electoral Prince of Hanover to England, a project which, as already noted, was the most obnoxious possible to Anne. Lord Haversham, a bitter Tory, got wind of the plan, and immediately waited on the Queen to apprise her of it, suggesting that the only thing for her to do was to anticipate the proposal by inviting the Prince herself. She had written to Marlborough earnestly entreating him to 'prevent this mor-

tification coming upon her,' and he wrote strongly, and it would appear effectually, to Sarah on the subject. This was in July, and about a month later we find the Queen remonstrating once more with the cruel stress that was laid on her by Marlborough's and Godolphin's constant threats of resignation, if she failed to comply with the Whig demands. 'There is nobody,' she says, 'more desirous than I to encourage those Whig friends that behave themselves well: but I do not care to have anything to do with those that are of so tyrannising a temper, and, not to run farther on those subjects, I think things are come to whether I shall submit to the five tyrannising lords or they to me. This is my poor opinion on the disputes at present, which could not be if people would weigh and state the case just as it is, without partiality on one side or on the other, which I beg for the friendship you have ever professed for me, you would do; and let me know your thoughts of what may be the best expedient to keep me from being thrown into the hands of the five lords.' Alas! this pathetic appeal, which corresponded so exactly with Marlborough's own earlier views on the subject, produced no effect on him. He certainly did not answer her in the spirit which she requested him to show, and it is supposed that he contented himself with copying a draught of Godolphin's which exists, and which must at once have convinced the Queen how little use there was in appealing to him. Marlborough's facility in letting himself thus be made a referee *pour rire*, a mere echo of the opinions of other people, cannot but be matter of surprise, and it is certain that it contributed not a little to the Queen's resentment. On the other hand, nothing

(except the Sacheverell business, and Marlborough's request for the Captain-Generalship for life) seems to have put a better weapon in the hands of the Tories than this indifference of his and Godolphin's to the Queen's personal wishes. In the political ideas of the age such indifference would have been scandalous in any case, but it was doubly scandalous in persons whose elevation to the highest posts in the State was universally known to be due to nothing so much as to that very personal influence which they now disregarded and thwarted in every possible way, contrary to their own professions and the arguments on which their own tenure of power was founded.

The elections of 1708 again displayed the factiousness of the party with which Marlborough and Godolphin had allied themselves. The Junta electioneered almost openly in their own interest, and not in that of the national government, of which, it must be remembered, Godolphin was the head. In England and in Scotland, repeating an old manœuvre, they combined with the extreme Jacobites. Failing to force Somers into the Presidency, they revived the project of inviting over the Electoral Prince, a point on which the Queen was more sensitive than any other, while Marlborough and Godolphin, though personally appealed to by Anne to save her from the tyranny of the five lords, not only took no heed but renewed the old trick of threatening resignation.

It will thus be obvious that the conduct of Marlborough's party, and too often his own, was in the highest degree imprudent. The Duchess harassed and tormented Anne in private, the Whig Junta in public

matters, and at the very time that they cried out on her for allowing her private inclinations to govern her conduct they seem to have studied every means of alienating those inclinations from themselves.

The project of promoting Somers was pursued during the whole year, and it is an interesting question (which the admirers of Somers never seem to have taken the trouble to answer), how his alleged patriotism and disinterestedness are to be reconciled with his pertinacity in seeking an object which was certainly one of no national importance. Being unsuccessful in their intrigue for Somers, the Whigs resorted to every possible means of annoying Godolphin and Marlborough, short of actually throwing up the offices they themselves held, which they threatened but took good care not to do. They forced Admiral Churchill out of the Admiralty and menaced Prince George. The good man solved the difficulty by dying, an event which enabled the greed of the Whigs to be satisfied by the advancement not merely of Somers but of Wharton, who was made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Halifax was the next subject of Whig policy, and after him, Orford. Indeed, the whole history of the Godolphin Government after Harley's dismissal may be said to be the history of Whig place-hunting. The same events recurred in cycles. The Queen indignantly protested against the monopolising of office by one party; the Duchess vehemently promoted it; Godolphin talked and acted with such lukewarmness that he disgusted the Whigs without recovering the goodwill of the Tories, and Marlborough, against his better judgment, was dragged into the same course. To cap the climax of injudiciousness the Duchess proceeded

almost to an open quarrel with the Queen, and Marlborough committed the great error of applying for the Captain-Generalship for life. It is doubtful whether it would have been constitutional to grant this; it was certainly, in Anne's present temper towards the Churchills, easy to represent it to her as a petition of the most grasping and ambitious kind. No part of Marlborough's conduct seems to have affected the public mind more than this. It is constantly urged in various forms in the masterly series of newspaper articles and pamphlets which Swift wrote or edited against the Whigs and their great champion. It was this that gave point and application to Bolingbroke's famous manœuvre of summoning Booth, the actor, to his box after the performance of Addison's 'Cato' and presenting him with a purse of guineas for 'defending the cause of liberty against a perpetual dictator.' And though it is difficult for those who have long learnt to regard the Commandership-in-chief as a mere administrative office naturally and usefully held during life or good behaviour, it must be remembered that the memory of Cromwell was not far off, and that with the still nearer memory of James's attempt to dragoon England into popery, a standing army was the subject of the most genuine and lively distrust if not detestation to the vast majority of Whigs and Tories alike. That Marlborough should have made a demand so certain to excite odium in the very face of his own failing influence and popularity must always be taken as the very strongest proof of the extent to which he had lost grasp of the political situation. The brief period of Whig predominance now drew to an end, and the circumstance which brought about the downfall not only

of the Whigs but of the Godolphin Government is no less famous than the career of Abigail Hill. It is not necessary to say much here about the Sacheverell trial. Marlborough, like Somers, was against the fatal blunder of making a political matter of this—a blunder which it is impossible not to attribute rather to the hot-headed Sunderland than to the alleged sensitiveness of a political hack of thirty years' experience like Godolphin. But, though Marlborough was not responsible for this blunder, he fell into the trap on his own account by resisting the Queen's command to bestow a regiment on Abigail's brother. He followed this up by attempting to insist on the dismissal of Mrs. Masham, a measure in which he was but feebly supported by the Whigs themselves, and which was evidently a complete mistake. The end of a very unwise business was that the Queen withdrew her point about the regiment, and Marlborough was forced to withdraw his much more important point about Mrs. Masham, a compromise which was justly regarded as a defeat for him. On this matter followed the decision of the Sacheverell case (with a nominal victory for the Government, and with the manifestation of a violent Tory spirit throughout the country), the failure of the congress of Gertruydenberg, and a final quarrel between the Queen and the Duchess. Harley proceeded in his return match with remarkable dexterity. No instance of Marlborough's mismanagement is more remarkable than his having omitted or failed to attach the Duke of Shrewsbury to the interest of the Government. Shrewsbury was a very singular person, and for the quarter of a century between the accession of James and that of George might be called a modern

kingmaker. He was not a consistent politician, and his private character was not blameless. But he had the advantage which, when once gained, has been observed to seldom leave a man during political life in England; he was, or was supposed to be, entirely disinterested. If Harley may be trusted, he had been taken into counsel by Marlborough in 1707, and had unfortunately been thrown over by him for the Whigs. However this may be, he certainly was now made the engine of the Whig overthrow, as four years later he was the engine of the Whig recovery. He is accused by the Duchess and other partisans of duplicitous conduct to Marlborough, but this will not weigh much. It is certain that he was a warm supporter of Sacheverell, and this may be said to have given fair warning of what was to come.

It came, however, with sufficient suddenness. In April, when Marlborough was away and Godolphin at his house at Newmarket, Anne sent for the Marquis of Kent, an insignificant Whig who held the Chamberlainship, and demanded his staff of office, promising him a dukedom. She then conferred the post on Shrewsbury, informing Godolphin of the proceeding only after it was completed. The step thus taken was, of course, an open affront, and it is justly charged against Godolphin that he either lacked the spirit or the intelligence to take it as such and to resign with all his adherents. It is barely possible that such a course might have enlisted the popular sentiment on his side; the course which he actually pursued, of feebly remonstrating and holding on, was fatal. But it must be remembered in his defence that even yet the Ministerial system was very little developed, and that, though the Government had been flagrantly

Whig for years, neither he nor Marlborough had ever explicitly given up the theory of coalition with the Queen's servants of whatever party, ministering as best they could at the Queen's summons. Unless this theory is kept in view (and very few, if any, historians have kept it), all the transactions of this reign become obscure. It is especially noticeable that, after a first tiff of indignation, not merely Godolphin, but the Whigs themselves, acquiesced in the appointment. They had very soon to learn that to let 'I dare not wait upon I would' in politics is always fatal.

Shrewsbury meanwhile, with what would appear to be considerably worse duplicity than any that is charged upon Harley, endeavoured to keep upon good terms with his new colleagues, which was the easier that the Whigs, after the Sacheverell business, were desperately afraid of a dissolution. The next step in the Tory siege was a less bold but a more insidious one. It was led up to by a mistake of Marlborough's, who, in submitting a list of promotions to the Queen, stopped short, it was impossible to think by accident, of Hill and Masham. He had to yield, as it must have been perfectly clear to any man of half his intelligence that he would have to yield, and his inexorable foes followed up their victory by adroitly suggesting that the Duchess should seek a reconciliation with Mrs. Masham. Of course she refused, and equally of course she put herself in the wrong by refusing. All these things were so excellently directed by Harley and so badly met by the Whigs, that disunion began to grow even among the latter. The Whigs, moreover, had never been thoroughly well affectioned to Marlborough, and, despite

their obligations to him, it is difficult to find very great fault with them. It was, indeed, notorious that Marlborough's coming round to their party, or rather (for it can hardly be said that he ever openly proclaimed himself a Whig) entering into alliance with it, had been merely the result of interested calculation. With the curious dramatic justice which political affairs so often show, they were by no means eager to take up heartily the Marlborough-Masham quarrel, though on Marlborough's own part if not on his wife's it had been originally entered upon much more because Mrs. Masham was supposed to be working against the Whigs, than because she was a personal enemy of the Churchills. Marlborough, as we have seen, had declared war against Abigail with some reluctance and after warning his wife 'not to struggle against wind and tide;' and now, when he wished to make it a war to the knife, the allies for whose sake he had at least partly declared it hung back. The irony of the situation is certainly rather pathetic: but it cannot be denied that the pathos is distinctly ironical. Nor were the Junta indissolubly united even among themselves. It soon became notorious that a dead set would be made upon Sunderland, whom the Queen had always disliked extremely, who was not too affectionately regarded even by his immediate colleagues, and who was, owing to his hot and acrimonious temper, obnoxious to many of the more moderate Whigs. By fixing on this unpopular victim, Harley showed his political genius; by consenting to the victim's sacrifice, Somers and his friends showed their lack of it. For a moment Marlborough seemed ready to espouse the cause of his son-in-law, but a 'round robin' from all the

ministers except Somerset and Shrewsbury induced him to withdraw his resignation. This may be considered as the final mistake which Marlborough committed. He had refused to support the Queen against Sunderland, he now refused to support Sunderland against the Queen, and it was inevitable that he should come to be regarded as a man to whom office and the opportunity of showing his military genius were above all other considerations. On the other hand, the remaining ministers, and especially the rump of the Junta, Somers, Orford, and Halifax, showed their own sense of weakness by abandoning their colleague. From this time forth the Administration may be taken as doomed. And the keen political sense of Walpole, himself a member of it, saw this. 'I think,' he wrote to Marlborough on June 6, 'our affairs here at home in a most unaccountable situation. Lord Sunderland, it is agreed by all, is to be removed, and by none endeavoured to be saved. I don't know what this means: but I am sure it must end in the dissolution of this Parliament, and in the destruction of the Whigs.' Craggs wrote to the Duchess to the same effect, and Marlborough himself in a letter to Sarah exclaims against the 'tame quietness' of the Whigs, pronounces them 'mistaken if they think this will go no further than the mortifying of you and me,' and declares that 'their ruin and a new Parliament is most certainly the scheme.' It was all in vain, and the successive steps which ended in Sunderland's being deprived of his appointment were arranged so as to bring the pusillanimity of Godolphin and the disunion of the Whigs more and more in evidence, and so to discredit the Ministry further and further.

The Tories gave it no respite. In the place of Sunderland they appointed Dartmouth, a High Churchman if not a Jacobite, and before long the final mine was sprung. It had already become evident that the Whigs were too fain of office to quarrel even with the removal of their own friends, that Marlborough could be forced into holding his command, that Godolphin's influence was gone, while every sign from the country pointed to a Tory majority in the next Parliament. On August 7, 1710, after a personal audience, in which he asserts that the Queen distinctly requested him to 'go on,' Godolphin was summoned by a servant to break his staff. His reception of the order was very honourable to himself,[1] and indeed it must be admitted that timidity, not corruption, was Godolphin's chief fault. He did not attempt to resist the Queen's order, and she begged Marlborough to continue in command. No new Lord Treasurer was created, but Harley was put at the head of the commission, and Lord Poulett was made Chancellor of the Exchequer. Even now, so consummate was Harley's management, he contrived to play the hapless Whig fish. The party had never been kindly disposed to Godolphin, and they seem to have entertained the absurd notion that they could continue in office as well without as with him. Indeed, there seems no strong reason for believing that Harley was determined to make a pure Tory administration. He offered amity to the Whigs. But they would neither resign nor coalesce, and at last resignation became

[1] He is accused of showing violent temper in private, which is scarcely to be wondered at; his public conduct and his formal letters to Marlborough are what is referred to in the text.

imperative. First Somers, then the entire body of Whig Ministers, resigned and were replaced by Tories; a dissolution took place on September 26; Sacheverell made his triumphal progress; the elections turned completely in favour of the Tories; and the entire fabric of political influence which Marlborough had so carefully built up tumbled to the ground.

The language of St. John, in a private letter on the occasion, is undoubtedly rather brutal; but there is little reason for quarrelling with its truth. 'He has nothing to reproach us with. His wife, Lord Godolphin, and himself have thrown the Queen's favour away, and he ought not to be angry if other people have picked it up.' Bolingbroke did not often make a mistake in statement, and it is impossible, after two hundred years' discussion of the subject, to add very much to his words.

Even after the dismissal of the Whigs and the confirmation of the Queen's action by the general election, Marlborough's career as a general was by no means ended. Nor is it very clear that it need have been if he himself had not adopted a course of action which was not only in itself injudicious, but contrasted notably with his professions not many years earlier. It will not do to take too literally the account of Bolingbroke, according to which a combination of baits and threats was at once offered to induce Marlborough to 'leave his new friends the Whigs and take up with his old friends the Tories,' 'no longer to leave his country to rapine and faction,' and 'to restrain the rage and fury of his wife.' But the fact, if not the manner of the fact, is perfectly evident from the terms of Marlborough's own

disclaimers in his letters to Sarah as to 'acting with Mr. Harley and the Tories.' That he was pursued and entreated to a peace is clear—equally clear that he refused the offer. 'I detest Mr. Harley,' he says; a bad sign in a man who had been accustomed to use friends and foes alike and to detest nobody. Now, if Marlborough detested Mr. Harley, it may be taken as pretty certain that Mr. Harley, who was a very astute person, was not long in finding it out. He showed, however, at first no signs of retaliating. There were difficulties about the expenses of Blenheim; but when it is remembered how enormously the expenses exceeded the estimate,[1] it is not quite certain that Marlborough might not have found a more modern treasury equally recalcitrant. Nor could he, according to the manners of the time, make much objection to the cashiering of three partisan officers of his, Macartney, Meredith, and Honeywood, who publicly drank confusion to the new Ministry.[2] Leave granted to the Duke of Argyll without reference to Marlborough was a more legitimate grievance, but it must be remembered that Marlborough had put himself in a thoroughly false position. He was notoriously holding office as general to carry out the views of a particular political party; he had certainly rejected the offers of the new Ministry to return to the creed and the attitude which he had held during the greatest part

[1] It had been expected that the house would cost a hundred thousand pounds: first and last it cost nearly three hundred thousand.

[2] Swift has some agreeable remarks in his driest style on this matter in the *Examiner*, No. 20. He suggests judicially that 'It might perhaps be prudent to forbid the detestable custom of drinking to the damnation or confusion of any person whatsoever.'

of his life, and he was ostentatiously maintaining connections with their bitter enemies. Their conduct in details may not have been, probably was not, defensible; for Harley was one of those born intriguers who delight in administering a *croc-en-jambe* to any adversary, and St. John, though far from ungenerous, was a red-hot partisan. Among these details it is difficult not to rank the omission of a vote of thanks for military services to Marlborough at the end of 1710, breaking a custom of many years' standing, which, especially in the cases of Blenheim and Ramillies, had sometimes been completed by triumphal processions to St. Paul's during Marlborough's winter visits to England. It is true that the advantages gained were chiefly strategical and had been dearly bought, but as a solemn thanksgiving was offered to the Divinity for successes in Flanders, the usual vote of thanks to the instruments of those successes could hardly be called unreasonable.

Parliament met on November 25, and Marlborough returned home a month later much depressed by the situation in which he found himself and by the imminence of the Duchess's final disgrace. This, accelerated and aggravated by Sarah's usual conduct, happened in the following January, though Marlborough (with a spirit which cannot but be called undignified, though the outward expression of it was nothing extraordinary for the age) went on his knees to the Queen to beg her not to insist on the surrender of the gold key which was the symbol of office. The Duchess, with an exquisite felicity of putting herself in the wrong which must have delighted her enemies and her husband's, requited Anne for the gift of hun-

dreds of thousands by removing the brass locks on her apartments in the palace and giving orders, the execution of which Marlborough seems to have been in time to prevent, for the removal of the marble chimneypieces and other fixtures. It is scarcely to be wondered at that when Marlborough's agent, Maynwaring, solicited Harley about the delays at Blenheim, he should have received the answer, 'The Queen is so angry that she says she will build no house for the Duchess of Marlborough when the Duchess has pulled hers to pieces.' Yet Maynwaring himself, in this very letter, admits that Harley expressed his willingness to live on good terms with the Duke. It would be easier to dismiss this as mere hypocrisy if we were not in possession of the evidence showing that the Duke was not disposed to live on good terms with Harley. Months, indeed, after the Duchess's disgrace and when Marlborough had returned to the Continent, both St. John and Harley persisted in their overtures to him—a superfluity of hypocrisy, if it was hypocrisy, which would be both extravagant and unintelligible. It is, however, certain that they had little hope of really securing him, and that they were not extraordinarily careful of his feelings. His complaint of 'the villainous way of printing which stabs me to the heart,' is pathetic enough and may be said to render his alleged impassiveness not a little dubious; but from Swift's confessions as to the difficulty of stopping the opposition pamphleteers, it is clear enough that Harley and St. John might have been quite unable to stop the 'villainous way' if they had tried. For no one can reasonably doubt that the unpopularity of Marlborough among a

great part of the people was quite genuine and was growing. The blood and treasure expended on the war were more and more bitterly felt; the very disputes about Blenheim drew attention to the enormous outlay on it, and as we know from a note of the Tory Hearne,[1]

[1] He gives, under date January 13, 1706, 'An Estimate of the yearly Income of one Prince [i.e. the Duke of Marlborough]:—

	Pounds per ann.
Plenipotentiary to y^e^ States	7,000
General for y^e^ English Forces on Mr. H.'s establishment	5,000
General in Flanders on Mr. B—g's establishment	5,000
Master of y^e^ Ordinance	3,000
Travelling charges as Master of y^e^ Ordinance	1,825
Colonell of y^e^ Foot Guards, being 24 Companies	2,000
Pension	5,000
From y^e^ States, as General of their Forces	10,000
From y^e^ Foreign troops in English pay, at 6*d.* per pound, as per warrant	15,000
For keeping a table	1,000
Keeper of y^e^ Great and Home Parks	1,500
Mistress of the Robes	1,500
Privy Purse	1,500
Groom of the Stole	3,000
Total	62,325

'The States General on y^e^ battle of Blenheim, presented a blank bill of 50,000 livres, besides presents from Germany and Flanders, from officers and others for employments, and y^e^ profits on exchange of money, and by safeguards, &c. The estate of Woodstock is not reckoned because it cannot yet be known what it will cost to build and furnish a palace there. The Emperor gave gifts to y^e^ value of 50,000 livres, besides what was presented by the King of Prussia, the Elector of Hanover, and other Courts.'—*Collections*, ed. *Doble*, i. 162. Somerville and Stanhope give the same list.

Note that Hearne mentions the 2½ per cent. commission, as to which such a coil was afterwards made, and that he mentions it as on exactly the same footing as Marlborough's unquestioned emoluments.

years before the immense receipts of the favourite and her husband had long been counted and watched with the sharpest envy and indignation. That these feelings were represented on the committee which, during the spring of 1711, was appointed to inspect the national accounts, is certain; and it was not very long before

A much better known but less exact estimate of Marlborough's gains is contained in the sixteenth number of the *Examiner*, where Swift has ingeniously drawn up the following:—

A Bill of Roman Gratitude.

Inprim.	£	*s.*	*d.*
For frankincense and earthen pots to burn it in	4	10	0
A bull for sacrifice	8	0	0
An embroidered garment	50	0	0
A crown of laurel	0	0	2
A statue	100	0	0
A trophy	80	0	0
A thousand copper medals value halfpence apiece	2	1	8
A triumphal arch	500	0	0
A triumphal car, valued as a modern coach	100	0	0
Casual charges at the Triumph	150	0	0
	994	11	10

A Bill of British Ingratitude.

Inprim.	£
Woodstock	40,000
Blenheim	200,000
Post-office grant	100,000
Mildenheim	30,000
Pictures, jewels, &c.	60,000
Pall Mall grant	10,000
Employments	100,000
	540,000

The *Medley*, which tried to keep up on the other side with the *Examiner*, presented a counter-statement in which the towns taken by Marlborough were charged *per contra* at £300,000 each and set to his credit.

it became evident that the result of them would appear to concern the Duke directly. It is probable that Harley would have been unable to restrain the extreme Tories if he had wished. But the secret negotiations now pending through Lord Raby, afterwards Lord Strafford, made it more and more inconvenient to have Marlborough at the head of military affairs, and by degrees the conduct of the ministry, which at first will at least bear the colour of an attempt to find a *modus vivendi* with the general, turned into an indirect and far from creditable attack on him. Yet, in March and again in July, a sort of *rapprochement* took place between Harley, now Earl of Oxford, and Marlborough. From Stair's account, who was the agent in the negotiations, it certainly would appear that Harley either for once merited the charge of bad faith, or at best rejected very explicit offers of peace and amity with Marlborough, these offers being accompanied by an alternative offer of resignation. But it must be remembered that this is an *ex parte* statement, made about twenty years after date, that the financial inquiry into the expenses of the war had already gone far, and had roused so much popular feeling that Harley might have been unable to stem it, and that the whole question resolves itself into this: Was Marlborough, or was he not, irrevocably opposed to the peace on which the Ministers were bent? and did the *rapprochement* turn upon his abandoning this opposition? It seems to me that a good deal of confusion exists on these points in the minds of some thorough-going defenders of Marlborough and opponents of the Peace of Utrecht. He cannot have the credit of opposing the peace to the

death, and also of being subjected to unmerited treatment by the makers of that peace.

The storm finally broke on him in November. Sir Solomon Medina, bread contractor to the army, then deposed before the committee of investigation that he had paid to the Duke sums amounting in all to some seventy thousand pounds for his private use. Marlborough's reply was prompt, that the payments had been customary before his time and had been regarded and expended as secret service money, nor is there practically any other answer to the charge given or needed to this day. But the Duke committed the mistake, or at any rate took the step, when he returned to England on November 18, of declaring himself opposed to the peace, remonstrating with the Queen and absenting himself from the council. This was surely a declaration of war against the ministry, and St. John can hardly be blamed for the words he used: 'His fate hangs heavy upon him.' Not, of course, that Marlborough was not perfectly within his rights in opposing the peace. But it is certainly surprising that he should have thought it possible or reasonable at once to oppose the peace and to receive the support of the ministry whose chief measure he was obstructing and whose very existence as ministers a coalition between himself, Shrewsbury, Buckinghamshire, and some others was supposed, and not unreasonably supposed, to threaten for a moment.

At any rate the ministry resolved to keep no more terms with him. The Medina charges, and others founded on a deduction of two and a half per cent. from the pay of the auxiliaries which he had admitted and

justified, were formulated in a solemn report. This was printed by order of the Government, and on December 31, 1711, an entry was made in the council books that the information having been laid against the Duke before the House of Commons, Her Majesty thought fit to dismiss him from all his employments that the matter might undergo an impartial investigation. The dismissal was conveyed to Marlborough in a letter from the Queen herself, which is not extant; the Duchess says he burnt it. The reply, however, exists and is not very happy. It is long and it contains some damaging admissions. Thus Marlborough acknowledges that 'my duty to your Majesty and the country would not give me leave to join in the counsel of a man who, in my opinion, puts your Majesty upon all manner of extremities,' and asserts that 'the friendship of France must needs be destructive,' and that 'that court had a root of irreconcilable enmity.' Surely these phrases justified those who said that with Marlborough in command and power, peace was impossible. At any rate, he had behaved as if it was, and he paid the penalty. The greatest general of the age lost his employment nominally because he had taken what in those days all men took, the customary perquisites of his office, really because he was too determined to be a general or nothing.

CHAPTER X.

LAST YEARS.

Severe as was Marlborough's fall, it is not probable that either he or any of his contemporaries perceived that it was, as it turned out to be, a practical close to his public life. He lived for ten years longer, his party triumphed, and he held positions of nominally great importance. But he was never again actively engaged at the head of affairs, and though the new dynasty had to fight for its life almost immediately on attaining it, the greatest captain in England, the greatest captain in Europe, was not employed in its service. Parliamentarily speaking, the fracas with Poulett and Argyll was also the last important appearance of Marlborough. The history of these last years, which I shall now give briefly, will in part explain this seeming paradox; for it is undeniable that Marlborough's conduct was on the whole injudicious. But there were other reasons. His health was already seriously affected by the enormous labours he had undergone and the chagrin in which they had ended. Moreover, though not really an old man (he was but sixty-two), he had outlived his immediate associates and found himself, partly owing to his own fault, alone among a

younger generation who were on both sides but ill-disposed towards him. He had injured and been injured by the Tories too deeply for forgiveness on either side. He had never possessed the confidence of the Whigs proper, nor had he ever sympathised with them. Now the principle of party government, which had been gradually crystallising for four reigns, had at last attained solidity, and it was impossible for a man to try to use both parties, as Marlborough had done, without disgusting both. At a much later period and by a curious coincidence, another great soldier, taking part in politics, carried Whig measures or acquiesced in them without losing the confidence of the Tories, and belonged to the Tories without forfeiting the respect of the Whigs. But nothing, save the Duke of Wellington's services, united with his stainless political reputation, enabled even him to carry out his famous and favourite theory of duty to the Queen's Government. Unfortunately Marlborough's antecedents were very different, and when he once lost the personal favour of the sovereign, his hold on public affairs was lost altogether.

There is no doubt that this loss was confirmed and made certain by the singular step—of going abroad—which he took not long after his disgrace. It is true that the intervening months—January to October—had been months of considerable vexation to him. He had hardly been disgraced when Eugene arrived for a personal visit, which had been long planned by the Whigs in the hope that it might strengthen the war party. In the circumstances it is pretty certain that it did more harm than good to the cause it was intended to further. Englishmen have never liked foreign

interference in their politics; and at that time the objection to 'foreigners' was far stronger than it is now. Moreover, even in the dim and rudimentary conception of political dignity which then prevailed, it must have seemed somewhat indecent that a foreign prince—a professional, and, as ill-natured people might put it, a mercenary soldier—should be imported to counteract and thwart the measures of the responsible ministry of the Queen of England. At any rate Eugene, though most politely received, effected nothing; and his generous but somewhat imprudent partisanship for Marlborough, probably did that general no good either with the authorities or the people.[1] No one now-adays takes seriously the wild story devised, or at least reported, by the Jesuit Plunket, to the effect that a plot (countenanced if not started by Eugene, Marlborough, and the Hanoverian envoy Bothmar) was on foot for setting London on fire, seizing the Queen's person, and proceeding to further measures which seem to have varied, as usual, according to the taste and fancy of the deponent. But it is by no means certain that no one then believed it. It was but a little more than thirty years since Titus Oates had set all London and half England frantic with a more improbable story; the 'Irish night' was a memory still more recent, and the imprudence of swashbucklers like Macartney and Meredith gave a certain colour, especially in conjunction

[1] The story is well known how Oxford, at a dinner to the Prince, gave 'The greatest captain of the age.' Eugene, with more wit than politeness, replied, 'If I am so, I owe it to your lordship.' But at this time the populace of London were crying, 'Thief! Stop thief!' after Marlborough, and it is to be feared that Eugene's rapier was weak against this kind of bludgeon.

with a coincident outburst of Mohock outrages, to the assertion. The Queen seems certainly to have been frightened, and it is by no means clear that Swift did not believe that there was some foundation for the story. His attitude in the matter is, however, certainly peculiar, not to say *louche*. The anonymous editor of the 'Four Last Years of Queen Anne,' whoever he was, has hit off Swift's handling of these and other points in Marlborough's career rather happily, by remarking that, 'in a manner peculiar to this author' he 'insinuates a new crime by seeming to attempt to acquit Marlborough of aspiring to the throne.' The history of what the same writer calls Swift's charge against Eugene, of 'raising and keeping up a most horrible mob with intent to assassinate Harley,' and of the other matters concerned, is as follows. On the 17th of November, 1711, just before Marlborough's dismissal ('Queen Elizabeth's day') a great pope-burning was arranged for. These pope-burnings were constant occasions of riot, and when Tory governments were in power had always been subjects of anxiety to the authorities. In the 'Journal to Stella' Swift rather pooh-poohs the affair; but as Scott and others have insisted on this in opposition to the words in the 'Four Last Years,' it may be well to point out that he says even in the 'Journal' 'they had some very foolish and mischievous designs, and it was thought they would have put the rabble on assaulting my lord treasurer's house and the secretary's.' The militia was called out, the figures carried by the procession seized, and a pamphlet, in which Swift may have had some slight hand, and which is to be found in his works, gave a grave and very circumstantial account of the intended tumult. Marl-

borough had returned from Flanders on this day, and the accusation against him takes form in the 'Four Last Years' thus:—'Whether this frolic were only intended for an affront to the Court, or whether it had a deeper meaning, I must leave undetermined. The Duke in his own nature is not much turned to be popular; and in his flourishing times, whenever he came back to England upon the close of a campaign, he rather affected to avoid any concourse of the *mobile* if they had been disposed to attend him: therefore so very contrary a proceeding at this juncture made it suspected as if he had a design to have placed himself at their head.' There the matter rested for the moment. But when Eugene came over in January, similar designs were once more attributed to Marlborough and his friends by the extreme Tories. The reference in the 'Four Last Years' is even more studiously vague than before. After some innuendoes on Eugene's 'Italian cruelty,' he is accused of suggesting that the treasurer might be taken off, and that, as a preliminary, small riots might be raised. Next the Mohock outrages are described, and it is remarked that 'an effectual stop was put to these enormities, which probably prevented the execution of the main design.' The historian then glides off with an apology for 'such an imputation,' excusing himself by saying that the account was given by more than one person present, and confirmed by letters and papers. It is needless to say that the witnesses are unidentified, and that the letters and papers have never been produced. The real informant, as far as there was one, was, as has been said, a Jesuit named Plunket, whose information after long lying hid was published in Bolingbroke's

correspondence and in Macpherson's collections and history. It was from Plunket beyond all doubt that Torcy, who refers to the story with the cautious words 'si l'on en croyait des gens peutêtre mal informés,' derived his intelligence, and there is no doubt that Plunket's authority was worthless. The simple consideration that the Ministry, if they had had the slightest evidence, would have eagerly used it to ruin their chief enemies for ever, would dispose of it even if there were no other reasons for doubting it. But no doubt it did some harm to Marlborough.

Again, when the orders given to Ormond to cease active operations came (on May 28) to be discussed in Parliament, Marlborough, who had for years been a rare speaker, met with a misadventure. He not only inveighed, as of course he had a right to do, against the peace, but appealed to Argyll to bear him out as to the necessity of a vigorous prosecution of the war. Argyll rose and unexpectedly declared that, no doubt, if the war *had* been vigorously prosecuted it would have been best, but that Marlborough had neglected to do so when he might, and that action was in his (Argyll's) opinion now useless. This damaging speech Marlborough, having invited it, could not directly resent. But he was provoked by the clumsier but still more galling remark of Lord Poulett, that Ormond 'did not resemble a certain other general who led troops to the slaughter in order to fill his pocket by selling commissions,' and sent Mohun with a challenge. The fight did not come off. Indeed, it seems that Poulett was more successful than Mr. Winkle in indirectly procuring the intervention of the civic arm. For this

conduct Marlborough could not, according to the ideas of the day, be fairly blamed; yet, as everything at this time turned to his disparagement, he was charged with introducing political duels into England, and the incident undoubtedly heightened the odium of the subsequent Hamilton-Mohun affair. Finally Godolphin died, and Marlborough lost a close comrade of thirty years in good and ill luck, in good (it must be added) and ill dealing. Before going abroad he obtained a regular passport, worded in terms suggesting a kind of irregular mission, through Oxford; and it is recorded that the Queen said, 'The Duke of Marlborough has acted wisely in going abroad.' But why he did this, unless it was because of the chagrins just mentioned, no one seems to know—for the reasons, sometimes alleged, that actions against him were threatened on the public account about the bread money, in private about the building of Blenheim, are quite insufficient, unless it is implied that Marlborough had no defence to make. Political justice had been, and even for some time was ill-administered in England now and then; but I do not know of a single instance tending to prove that the ordinary courts would have given unjust judgment in a plain question of money due. A story is referred to by Scott in one of his notes on Swift, to the effect that Harley had got hold of the evidence tending to connect Marlborough with the disaster of Camaret Bay. Either he threatened to use it if Marlborough did not quit England, or Marlborough fled in fear, the former hypothesis being alone consistent with the granting of the passport. In the first place, there is no proof whatever of this; in the second, it would have been much

more to Harley's advantage (supposing he did not use the information at once and publicly) to hold it in terror over Marlborough, and to hold Marlborough in England, and on his good behaviour, than to let him go abroad to intrigue with Hanover and with foreign powers. But the strongest argument of all is that no statesman of that time, and the head of the Tory Government, which was negotiating the Treaty of Utrecht, least of all, could afford to wake the sleeping dogs of Jacobite intrigue in the reign of William. The Camaret Bay matter could not well have come out alone, and many of Harley's own party, more than one even of his own colleagues in the Ministry, would have had their heads little firmer on their shoulders than Marlborough. The most probable explanation is that Marlborough, chagrined and humiliated by his altered position in England, was very glad to escape from the scene of the chagrin and the humiliation. It may be added (though this is not a conclusive argument) that an act of grace passed so recently as 1709 would apparently have protected Marlborough in this particular case from legal powers, though not, of course, from public obloquy. The Duchess did not immediately accompany him, and the most significant circumstance of the many that have been mentioned about the matter is that, before leaving England, he vested his estates in his sons-in-law as trustees, and lodged 50,000*l.* in the Dutch funds, 'in order,' says Sarah, 'to secure a subsistence if the Stuarts were restored.' Meanwhile, before he left England his unpopularity was increased by the killing—according to some stories the murder—of the Duke of Hamilton by Lord Mohun, who was a strong partisan of Marl-

borough's, and whose second, charged with treacherously stabbing Hamilton, was General Macartney, one of the disgraced general's *âmes damnées*.

Marlborough's foreign journey, which was begun on November 28, 1712, whether it was an exile, a flight, a political expedition, or merely a distraction, was at first prolific in compliments. He was received by the garrisons of Ostend, Antwerp, and Maestricht with almost royal honours, and his journey was a triumphal progress. He stayed for some time at Aix-la-Chapelle and then returned to Maestricht, where he was joined by the Duchess in February, and afterwards established himself at Frankfort, making excursions to Mindelheim and elsewhere. It was from Frankfort that, new charges of malversation being brought against him, he wrote an answer to be laid before both Houses which his partisans regard as final, and which certainly seems to have stopped all further proceedings. This new and last charge was connected with a rather intricate detail of military administration, Marlborough being charged with giving instructions to enter complete musters of the English troops when they were in reality defective, and with obtaining perquisites or fees on the strength of such musters. He pleaded in return (and, as has been said, no reply seems to have been made to the plea), first that he had acted under distinct statutory authority, secondly that (at least this seems to be the drift of his very technical defence) the muster-money was applied to recruiting, and that the public was saved expense by the proceeding. To finish with this question of malversation, it cannot be too much impressed upon the reader that the frequent rhetorical

allusions to Marlborough in all sorts of books as having 'starved the soldiers,' 'cheated them of their pay,' and so forth, are rhetoric and nothing more. The only two charges which an investigation carried out with full powers and certainly in no friendly spirit could establish, were the reception of the bread money and the deduction of the sixpence a pound on the pay of the foreign troops. The evidence as to custom in the former case, and the royal warrants in the latter, must be allowed to exonerate Marlborough of anything like direct peculation, though the system of perquisites, gratuities, *pots-de-vin* and the like is one of course very dangerous in itself, and very liable to further abuse. From Frankfort he removed to Antwerp, and there spent the winter of 1713. He was doubtless sincerely grieved at the conclusion of the Treaty of Utrecht, more especially as it involved the restitution of the estate of Mindelheim to Bavaria. The English Ministry have been blamed for not preventing this, but the blame clearly concerned the Emperor only, who thus took away an Imperial gift, and though he promised indemnity never bestowed it.

The occupations of Marlborough at Antwerp are not very well known, but it is certain that he was partly employed in concerting, with the House of Hanover, measures for supporting their claim on the English throne by arms, and one of the most curious points in his history is the fact that at the same time confidential missions were sent by Harley and by Marlborough to Hanover. It is not obvious why, on patriotic grounds, Marlborough should object to the Prime Minister of England maintaining communications with the legal heir to the crown; and though his letters to his private

agents represent Harley's proceedings as a blind, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that a 'Codlin, not Short' feeling was, in reality, at the bottom of the affair. It does not appear that Marlborough did himself much good with the Elector by these proceedings. George, who had a good memory, had an old grudge against him arising from the campaign of Oudenarde, and he was quite shrewd enough to appreciate the motives of Marlborough's adherence to his interests. This adherence seems to have been carried pretty far, for Marlborough is said, on credible if not absolutely certain authority, to have made arrangements with Cadogan and Stanhope for bringing over troops from the continent at the Queen's death, for inducing the force occupying Dunkirk to declare for the Hanoverian line, and for providing money even at his own expense. The Princess Sophia, who was better disposed towards him than her son, appears to have given him a blank warrant (an exceedingly questionable document, looked upon from the point of view of the English constitution) appointing him commander-in-chief of her troops and garrisons on her accession to the crown. At the same time he seems to have intrigued, or, if that word appears question-begging, to have negotiated at the Hague, so as to inflame the resentment and apprehension of the Dutch in reference to the policy of the Tory Ministry. There is less evidence of transactions with the Chevalier, but it is almost impossible to reconcile the subsequent attitude of George I. to Marlborough with any other hypothesis than that the Elector was in possession of proofs, or at least very strongly suspected the existence, of some such dealings on Marlborough's part. Lord Stanhope

thought he had discovered proof of these dealings even after George's accession. But as this proof consists only in an allusion of Bolingbroke's, in a letter to the Chevalier, to 'the very sum which Marlborough had advanced to you' I cannot think it very urgent. On the whole, though authentic information is very scarce, it seems probable that Marlborough, both now and afterwards, committed the mistake of intriguing with too many parties, endeavouring, according to his old policy in the reign of William, to secure at once Hanover and St. Germains, Oxford and Bolingbroke, Tory and Whig. But the circumstances were completely changed.

His absence excluded him from direct participation in the singular and half-legendary events which immediately preceded the death of Queen Anne; but it can hardly have been an accident that he reached England the day after the Queen's decease. He had scarcely landed before he received a decisive proof that his day was over. The *coup d'état* (for it was practically that) had been, it must be remembered, effected not by the Whigs proper, but by Shrewsbury, Argyll, and Somerset, men who were equally removed from the Junta and the October Club. The two first, moreover, were personal enemies of Marlborough. It may have been due to this, or it may have been due to secret instructions from Hanover, that Marlborough's name was not to be found in the list of Lords Justices who held the Regency till the arrival of the Elector. He had, however, a warm reception on entering London, and it is said that when he had retired in dudgeon to Holywell, Bothmar and other Hanoverian agents apologised for the slight cast on him. Sarah informs us that he

resolved to hold no situation under the new Government, and that his resolve was partly due to her request upon her knees. This is not the situation or the sentiments in which it is easy to conceive her, and the simple explanation of the whole matter is, doubtless, that the grapes were sour. He met the new king at Greenwich, was graciously received, and was prevailed on to resume his appointments of Captain-General (which, however, in time of peace was honorary only) and Master of the Ordnance, while his sons-in-law held some honourable and lucrative employments. But none of them save Sunderland, who was, as it was held, banished to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, received any post conferring real power. It would have been better, perhaps, but was hardly to be expected, that Marlborough should have abstained from taking part in the impeachment of Oxford and Bolingbroke, and his historians, not without a sense of *quantum mutatus*, record how in the House of Lords he took a useful part in opposing some Jacobite tamperings with the Mutiny Bill, and by judiciously ordering new shirts and plenty of beer for his regiment of Guards, disposed those heroes, who had previously thrown their defective garments into the gardens of Marlborough House with disloyal expressions, to duty and loyalty. He took no active part in the suppression of the Jacobite risings; but his especial friend and *protégé* Cadogan commanded in Scotland with Argyll, and Marlborough himself had a certain official connection with the matter. The rise of Walpole, who had always been a friend of his, no doubt contributed to this.

The death of his daughters Elizabeth and Anne, however, about this time greatly affected him, and may

have induced a first stroke of paralysis which came upon him on May 28, 1716. He survived it six years, and it does not appear to be literally true that he was ever in a state of dotage, as Johnson's famous line declares. Indeed he continued to make his appearance in Parliament till very shortly before his death. But he never fully recovered, though Garth's skill and a visit to Bath restored his health to some extent after the first attack, and even after a second on November 10 he regained a tolerable share of health. It would have been wiser, no doubt, if he had taken the warning and abstained altogether from business; and he did offer to resign. But the offer was probably not meant to be taken, and was not, the political ambition of Sunderland desiring, it is said, to retain his father-in-law as a support. From this time, however, Marlborough was a mere shadow of himself.

As he grew weaker and his wife's temper worse, she was naturally a greater and greater curse to him. It is indeed said to have been due to her influence that he sold out in time from the South Sea Bubble, and having already more money than he knew what to do with, made a profit of 100,000*l*. But Sarah's temper, which had previously been exercised only indirectly on her family and friends, now that she was powerless to wreak it on her enemies, sought newer game. She quarrelled with Sunderland, she quarrelled with Cadogan, she libelled Craggs and Stanhope, and she plunged into lawsuits of every description. Nay, she was charged with taking up on her own account Marlborough's old policy of double-dealing, and with sending private supplies of money to

the Pretender, a charge which exposed Marlborough himself to very unpleasant suspicions.

For these somewhat melancholy last years we have, oddly enough, more personal detail in proportion than for his earlier life. It is curious how few of the touches that enliven biography are available, after the scanty and scandalous chronicle of his early youth, until what, if not his dotage, was certainly his retirement from business. He played cards a good deal, it is said, especially whist. His grandchildren and others acted plays before him, out of which Sarah, the rigidly virtuous, scratched some of the more amorous speeches, and allowed no embrace whatever, though the play was 'All for Love.' Mark Antony wore the sword that the Emperor had given to the Duke of Marlborough. Hoadley writ a 'prologue for the occasion,' and Miss Cairnes as high priest wore 'a very fine surplice that came from Holland for the chapel.' The chronicler—the Miss Cairnes in question, afterwards Lady Blayney—discreetly adds, 'no sacrilege, for the chapel was not finished many years after.' Sometimes he went to Richmond to visit the Prince of Wales, his old subordinate at Oudenarde, and he made several codicils to his will in the presence of numerous witnesses. During the winter of 1721 he seems to have been pretty well, but early in June next year a last paralytic stroke came, and he died, apparently quite sensible, at four o'clock in the morning on the 16th of that month. His last recorded words are said to have been uttered on the preceding evening, when, prayers having been read, the Duchess asked if he had heard them. He replied, 'Yes; and I joined in them;' nor can anyone who has

carefully read his life doubt that he joined with perfect sincerity.

His death took place at Windsor Lodge, which for many years had been his favourite country place of residence, Blenheim being only partially habitable even at the date of his death. But his body was immediately embalmed and removed to Marlborough House, where it lay in state for some days, and then received a magnificent funeral. Troops of all arms, with Cadogan, then Commander-in-Chief, at their head, escorted the car, which was gorgeously decorated, and carried the coffin with a full suit of armour lying upon it. The Duke of Montagu and the Earls of Sunderland and Godolphin as connections, were chief mourners, but many other peers attended, and the procession, for greater state, instead of going straight from Marlborough House to Westminster, journeyed westwards through the Park to Hyde Park Corner, turning there, and proceeding by Piccadilly, Pall Mall, and Charing Cross. The burial took place in Henry VII.'s Chapel; but this was formal only, and the body was finally transferred to Blenheim. The funeral, though military and splendid, was not strictly public, being neither ordered by Parliament nor paid for out of public money.

Marlborough had made his last will about a year before his death, and had distributed his enormous fortune, the exact amount of which seems to be nowhere stated, between his wife and children, the bulk of it going to Sarah for her life. That she lived for nearly a quarter of a century longer; that she was sought in marriage by Lord Coningsby and the Duke of Somerset; that she hated Walpole; that she hired literary men to

write a life of Marlborough which should not contain 'one line of verse'; that the literary men (Glover and Mallet), probably considering themselves insulted as poets by the stipulation, declined the task; that she fought and quarrelled with friends and foes to the last, are all well-known facts, and interesting in a certain order of historical gossip. But they have little or, in strictness, nothing to do with Marlborough.

The interest of his life and character is almost wholly military and political, and as such it is treated in this book. But a few words may be required to convey such more personal details of his life and conversation as have not been given elsewhere. They are, as has been more than once hinted, singularly few. It is natural to think, as Mr. Hill Burton thought, that in the silence about him there is a sign that he did not 'wear his heart upon his sleeve.' Yet we have plenty of personal details about men even more reserved than Marlborough, and in his preserved letters there are touches which seem to show that, if all had been preserved, we should have had more abundant details from himself. All authorities are agreed as to his personal advantages and the extraordinary charm of his manner. His portraits, armoured, periwigged, and ermined, with stately, placid features, indicating no special ruling passion, and having something of the appearance of a handsome mask, are familiar enough. The 'wart on his nose,' which Thackeray makes General Webb sarcastically refer to, is not prominent in most of these portraits, and it seems at any rate not to have interfered, either in youth or age, with the general acknowledgment of his good looks. He was of good stature,

but not very tall. Of his deportment Chesterfield, the awful Aristarch of that branch of criticism (who had no great fondness for him on the whole, and who delivers the absurd judgment on his intellect that there was in it 'no brightness,' 'no shining genius,' only 'a good plain understanding'), enthusiastically remarks that 'he possessed the graces in the highest degree, not to say engrossed them.' The attraction of his address seems to have extended to everyone, low or high, and the aged Evelyn, who had not seen him for many years, and thought he might have forgotten him, records the 'extraordinary civility and familiarity' with which Marlborough came up to him to renew their acquaintance. It may be interesting to know that on this occasion the Duke 'had a most rich George in a sardonyx; for the rest, very plain.' I have said that the phraseology of his letters gives me the idea that, if he had ever written for effect, he might have been a brilliant epistoler; and his powers of speech (though in general he was, except in polite attentions, rather taciturn) are well spoken of.

The chief private vice charged against him—that of avarice—concerns in great part his public career. In respect of private matters it may, perhaps, have been exaggerated. For instance, the story which Macaulay borrowed from Spence as to his having gold pieces in a drawer which he had received fifty years before, is exactly one of those stories which may mean anything or nothing. The hoarding of actual coin has gone out of fashion; but in those days it was a regular form of investment, and there would not nowadays be thought anything very shocking in a man retaining in old age

the same investments he had made in youth. Nor will anyone take very seriously the legend of his blowing out one of a pair of candles when he and Eugene were consulting on the night before Blenheim; still less the pleasant fable in the *Examiner* as to his horror when it was proposed to cut a pair of wet boots off his legs. But, no doubt, Marlborough, even with his great income, could not have accumulated such a fortune if he had not been, to say the least, careful; and the line between carefulness and avarice is never very easy to draw. As to his other private and personal characteristics, testimony was unanimous in declaring them to have been almost wholly amiable. And the explanation, always ready to hand, of hypocrisy is clearly not applicable to a great body of correspondence written without any view to publication, and chiefly to a person who was much less likely than most others to allow herself to be 'paid with words.' An early letter written when Henrietta and Anne Churchill were children has often been quoted, but will bear quotation once more, especially as paternal affection usually stops a good deal short of this kind of baby worship. 'You cannot,' he writes from Tunbridge to Sarah, who was away from home 'imagine how I am pleased with the children; for they having nobody but their maid, they are so fond of me when I am at home that they will be always with me kissing and hugging me. Their heats are quite gone, so that against you come home they will be in beauty. If there be room I will come on Monday, so that you need not write on Sunday. Miss is pulling me by the arm that she may write to her dear mamma: so that I shall say no more, only beg that you will love me as well as I love you,

and then we cannot but be happy.' 'I kiss your hands my dear mamma,' is added, and signed 'Harriet.' The letters on the Marquess of Blandford's death are full of unaffected pathos, and those dealing with a hope, which did not prove to be fulfilled, of Sarah being once more a mother soon after that event, have a singular delicacy and good feeling. The earlier letters after the separation brought about by the continental campaign have been already dealt with, and though they are somewhat more effusive than those which were written after many years of worry (a good deal of it due directly to Sarah), the latest preserved leave no doubt of the continuance and sincerity of Marlborough's family affection. His apologies for the devastation of Bavaria may be differently construed, but if they were insincere the insincerity is marvellously kept up, and the similar expressions as to the peasants of the north of France several years later should be compared. In opposition to the wild accusations of robbing and starving the private soldier, which rest on no evidence, not merely numerous expressions of sympathy in the letters for the sufferings of the troops may be quoted, but also a consensus of testimony that, as a general, Marlborough was remarkable for the care he took of his soldiers' welfare as well as for his thoughtfulness for the wounded on both sides after battle. Nor ought his own confident appeal to the troops at a rather ticklish time, in the manifesto he issued during the shirt-riot of the guards after George I.'s accession, to be neglected. Another *locus classicus* as to Marlborough's soft-heartedness is in a letter to Godolphin of Sept. 10, 1705. I do not know whether the Comte de Lyon was a refugee officer or a French prisoner; the wording looks

like the former, except that if so he might have had an awkward time of it 'in France.' 'The inclosed is a letter from a young woman of quality that is in love with the Comte de Lyon. He is at Lichfield. I am assured that it is a very virtuous love, and that, when they can get their parents' consent, they are to be married. As I do from my heart wish that nobody were unhappy, I own to you that this letter has made me wish him in France; so that if he might have leave for four months without prejudice to Her Majesty's service I should be glad of it.' Marlborough's enemies will perhaps say that the young woman of quality had doubtless bought Marlborough's sympathy with a handsome present, and of course with such assumptions short work can be made of most characters. But even such ingenious Devil's advocates will hardly find an evil explanation of his writing to Sarah two years later, 'I leave this camp to-morrow and shall certainly have the spleen to see the poor soldiers march in dirt up to the knees;' for there was here no case of the possible frustration of plans, the time being October and the movement nothing but a march into winter quarters.

It has just been said that he never regularly resided at Blenheim, the great palace with which his name is associated, in the erection of which he took such an interest, and which was to him a source of so much annoyance.[1] It was indeed not nearly finished

[1] Marlborough's houses, both at Blenheim and at the Friary (the present Marlborough House), attracted a great deal of attention from his contemporaries, and the familiar writings of the time, such as the gossipy *Wentworth Papers*, contain numerous references to their splendour. The main endeavour of the careful Duke was to avoid committing himself for any of the Blenheim expenses, and

at his death, and to the quarter of a million of public money which was expended on it about fifty thousand more had to be added from his estate. But from the moment of his receiving the Manor of Woodstock he became an important person in Oxfordshire, was shortly made its Lord Lieutenant, and was regarded by the Whig minority in the University as a welcome hope and support. Hearne's 'Collections,' now for the first time being published in full by the Oxford Historical Society, have unfortunately not yet gone further than 1707, or barely two years after the Duke became neighbour to Oxford. But, as it is, they add to the miserably scanty store of personal touches available. We have seen how, from a note of the Tory antiquary's, it is clear that, long before the committee of inquiry met, the percentage on foreign pay was even by malcontents regarded as on exactly the same footing as Marlborough's salary for any of his offices. But this is a matter of public interest, and though not without its value, belongs to the class of information of which we have plenty. What we have not plenty of is such details as the following: We hear on Jan. 23, 1706, that Dr. Mill, the New Testament scholar, and other Whig dons, went to Woodstock to wait on the Duke of

the frequent stoppage of the works arose partly from his rigid refusal to guarantee any outlay in advance of the Treasury warrants. Vanbrugh, the architect, naturally took the part of the workmen and contractors, which caused occasional unpleasantnesses between him and the Duchess. On the accession of George I. a new Act of Parliament supplied means for the discharge of arrears; but as the creditors' accounts were liberally taxed the matter came, in 1718, before the law courts. The final decision in the House of Lords was unfavourable to Marlborough, and it was owing to this that the completion fell on the duke's estate.

Marlborough—evidently not at all with Hearne's approval. But three days later we read: 'Dr. Mill and the other five who went with him to Woodstock to wait on the Duke of Marlborough and his Duchess' [who, it seems, was there too] 'were so poorly received that they certainly had dined with Duke Humphrey had they not put in at a house where a dinner was provided at their own expense. It seems the Duchess expected the University should have complimented the Duke, and therefore, when these gentlemen came to the house, the servant who was there to wait asked whether they were sent by the University, and understanding they were not, the reception was ordered accordingly.' The picturesque historian could make a page or two out of poor Dr. Mill's disappointment and his dinner provided at his own expense. Another time we hear that Lord Abingdon, having discontinued the plate he gave for a race on Port Meadow, the Duchess continued it, giving 'a plate of fifty *libs*.' But politics came in even on the turf, and one year only 'a parcel of Whiggish mobbish people' appeared, while next year only one horse ran. There are also references to bucks from Woodstock—a once favourite method of exercising influence, due or undue. Further, it may be said, in reference to Marlborough's relations with Oxford, that tradition—on what evidence I am not able to say—assigns the fine Georgian house now used as the judge's lodgings (No. 16, St. Giles's) as having been built by the Duke for a town house. This, if true, is the more interesting in that the provincial-capital system was already beginning to die out in the eighteenth century.

CONCLUSION.

In the foregoing chapters the reader has before him the main facts of Marlborough's life, stated, it is believed, impartially from the best authorities, and certainly commented on without the least determination to make the man out a fiend or an angel. The facts, rather than the arguments, no doubt will determine each man's own conclusion as to the moral character of Marlborough. Against that character the very worst that can possibly be said has been said by the novelist of greatest genius and the historian of greatest popularity that our time has known. Were it not that the magnificent and uncontested exploits which he performed for England constitute, even in 'slack-sinewed' days, a constant and irreducible set-off, Macaulay and Thackeray have given such a portrait of John Churchill as may well make a reader with no special knowledge hesitate before regarding him with anything but loathing. For the charges against him are not like the charges of a somewhat similar kind against Bacon. The very worst account of Bacon's conduct admits that he served his sovereign diligently and well in the very act, and as a necessary consequence of the act of betraying and injuring his friend. In Marlborough's case the friend and the sovereign were one, and in-

gratitude was complicated with treason instead of being excused by loyalty. So, again, Bacon's alleged venality was at the very worst complicated with nothing worse than venality. He did not, as Marlborough has been accused of doing, betray trust to his country's harm; he could—and we know that he did—represent the matter as a mere usual transaction, less culpable, let us say, than the giving or taking of a bribe at an election was once thought. Putting Bacon aside, no one of equal fame has been charged with crimes anything like Marlborough's. The desertion of James, the intrigues against William, the treachery in the matter of the Brest expedition, the alleged dealings with Louis, and with the Chevalier after Anne's death, excel anything (always excepting the case of Sunderland the elder) that is charged against any other public man in English history; and Marlborough's enemies demand that these shall only be considered as the head and front of a long muster of similar offendings. Venal without hesitation or limit; shamelessly and indifferently treacherous; not indeed wantonly cruel, but as careless of others' blood as of his own honour when his interest was concerned; faithless to his party; trimming to the end between the rival claimants to the crown; sordidly avaricious; such is the portrait of Marlborough that we are often asked to accept.

It has repeatedly been acknowledged in the course of the foregoing pages that it is idle to attempt to meet this by a simple *negatur*, or by the opposition portrait of a uniformly high-souled and consistent patriot. The facts of the case are impossible to get over in this way, as in commenting upon each of them it has been suffi-

ciently shown. It is possible to make large deductions from the unfavourable estimates of Marlborough's character at almost all times of his life; but what remains renders it futile to attempt to represent him as a man of delicate honour, of a high ideal of patriotism, of an innate and instinctive repugnance to dishonest gain. He was nothing of the sort, and the only excuse for him is to be found in the undoubted fact of the total debasement of the moral standard among the political men of his time. I cannot myself think of a single public man of that time except Halifax (Savile, not Montagu) and Somers who can be acquitted of conduct which was as dishonourable in kind, if not in degree, as Marlborough's. Halifax's independent fortune, and still more the intellectual pleasure which he seems to have taken in ostentatious and above-board trimming, saved him from dishonourable and underhand trimming. Somers, a man of no fortune and no connections, would have ruined his credit with the Whigs, and would not have gained any with the Tories, who had plenty of clever lawyers of their own, if he had ratted; and he did not rat. All other prominent men of any genius throughout the period were corrupt and rotten. It is undisputed that Algernon Sydney asked for the gold of France to stir up an insurrection in England, whether he did or did not take Barillon's guineas for his own use; and on this last point even no reasonable Whig has a doubt. Godolphin is admittedly tarred with the same brush as Marlborough. Shrewsbury, Devonshire, and Argyll ratted and rallied from and to each side incessantly. Of Danby and Russell it is unnecessary to do more than merely mention the names.

Peterborough's fame has a little gilded his extraordinary conduct in the Fenwick matter, but that conduct was such as no man of honour could have been guilty of. The elder Sunderland is a by-word, and the younger was only saved by the more acute disease of a frantic party spirit from corruption and treachery.

It is unnecessary to go over at length the explanation and in part excuse of this state of things which has been given by many previous writers. It is almost invariable in a revolutionary period, especially when disputed claims of loyalty are confused with, and sometimes clash with, disputed claims of religion. The best and most unprejudiced authorities have not disputed that Marlborough's attachment to what was then called the Protestant religion was perfectly sincere; and it is quite certain that he would have found much less difficulty in finding a casuistical defence for the less precise sins of covetousness and bad faith than his master did for the very precise and unequivocal sin of adultery. The conflicting motives and beliefs of Englishmen of that day are indeed not easy to represent to Englishmen of this. It is certain that the great majority of the people, from the highest and wisest to the lowest and most foolish, firmly believed that the Stuarts were the rightful kings of England. It is further certain that, in the breasts of a majority of this majority, the divine right of the sovereign, which in the abstract they admitted, clashed with the divine right of the religion which they admitted even more strongly, and which they conceived the sovereign to threaten. Here were two logically irreconcilable beliefs, either of which, paramount at one moment, might make a man (and by

no means hypocritically) hold that he was doing right when he did something which under the influence of the other dogma, or under no special influence at all, he would have shrunk from. The paramount allegiance due to the Protestant religion might make the perhaps unhistorical *guet-apens* of Warminster seem excusable and laudable. The paramount right of the legitimate sovereign of England might gild the too historical *guet-apens* of Camaret Bay. A *religio* of either kind certainly *tantum potuit suadere*, and has often persuaded things even worse.

But this was not all. It would be wholly idle to pretend that the conflict of opinion was not accentuated and complicated by a conflict of interest, and this is where Marlborough comes in for the heaviest censure. It is impossible for anyone to deny that interest, and interest of a very vulgar and unheroic kind, was constantly in his mind. When he is offered a dukedom he thinks it well 'to wait till we have a better estate,' and the context and sequel show too clearly that the objection was made rather to augment the estate with a view to the title than to refuse the title in view of the absence of the estate. The similar refusal of the German principality till a solid estate went with it is a little too similar to escape attention, though some kind of defence may be offered for it. It may seem cruel to revert again to the fashion in which he observes, in telling of his extraordinary escape from the French marauders, that the man 'has cost him fifty pounds a year ever since;' but what in another's mouth might be merely humorous, is quite sober and businesslike in Marlborough's. His avarice, indeed, was one of those

things which personal enemies may make the most of and exaggerate, but which they can hardly invent. And it is precisely this vice, and the carefulness which accompanied it, that has made Marlborough infamous for faults which, committed in almost equal, sometimes in fully equal degree by others, have simply inflicted a slight blemish on their memory. It is fortunately, or unfortunately, idle for moralists to contend that all vices are equal. The world never consents to hold this view. Godolphin shared Marlborough's crowning crime in regard to Talmash's expedition, and Ormond followed him to William's quarters. But Godolphin was a keen sportsman, and Ormond was, for openhandedness and generosity in every sense, the idol of the whole army. Had Marlborough had a few more taking virtues, even a few more amiable vices, he would probably stand far higher in popular estimation. But he early became *un homme ranyé* in respect of all the minor foibles of his time. He was inviolably constant to Sarah, he did not drink, he did not gamble, he seems to have cared little for any sport but the hunting of men on fields of battle. He was notorious, as his bitterest enemies admit, for his neglect to court popularity in any way. Even on the field of battle itself his absence of showy and popular characteristics still displayed itself, and probably gave rise to the absurd insinuation of cowardice against a man who was in the thick of a hundred fights. He could plan, and, better still, change his plans for the most complicated operations; he could teach the fainting battle how to rage, could bring up fresh troops at the very moment they were wanted, and rally fliers in the full torrent of their flight. But he lacked the hat-

waving, sword-flourishing, gallant-speech-making qualities of a general, and his fame has perhaps a little suffered from that too. Frederick the Great, as all men know, might at one time have been accused of cowardice with something more than a show of reason, and he exposed himself in battle not one whit more than Marlborough. But the few stories which are told, like the famous 'Wollt ihr ewig leben?' give his victories and his defeats the personal touch which is somehow wanting to Marlborough's, and have, perhaps, helped to excuse crimes blacker than Marlborough's as well as to enhance military genius far inferior, when the quality of his antagonists and his command of the resources on his own side are remembered.

But there is compensation in all things, and for those who delight in appreciating everything after its own kind, the life, and to a great extent the character, of Marlborough have a peculiar attraction, different indeed from, but not less than, the attraction of generals like Montrose and Claverhouse. With all his weaknesses, or rather with his one great weakness, of always playing to win, Marlborough had in perhaps the greatest measure of any Englishman every great practical quality of the English character, except unflinching honesty and truth. His covetousness, though not his parsimony, can, it is to be feared, hardly be set down as altogether un-English. But the entire absence of vainglory and *forfanterie* in him, the intense businesslike energy with which he set about his work, the complete freedom from flightiness and fidgetiness with which he carried it out, the thoroughness with which he put the final touches on it, are all examples, on the greatest scale, of qualities on which

Englishmen especially pride themselves. In Marlborough's fashion of war-making there was emphatically no nonsense. He never wasted a man or a movement; he never executed a single manœuvre for show; he never, either in words or deeds, indulged in the least gasconading. Probably no man ever had such a superhuman business as he had put on his shoulders in the business of at once fighting half Europe and keeping the other half in fighting order. Help, of the practical kind, except from Godolphin's financial talent, he had none. Obstacles he had innumerable; probably no man ever had so much of what is specially irritating to most expert craftsmen, the difficulty of getting at the work that they are specially fitted to do. For the four great occasions on which Marlborough was enabled to show his talent unhampered or almost unhampered, there must have been at least forty when, if he had not been hampered, if he had been in the position of Frederick or of Napoleon, he might have equalled Blenheim in success and Ramillies in tactics. To say that he never complained of these hindrances and disappointments would, of course, be untrue. Considering the voluminous and unrestrained private correspondence of his that we have, such an absence of complaint would have been an evidence rather of hypocrisy or insensibility than of heroism. But his annoyance never affected his judgment, never obscured his vision. The hackneyed simile of the angel deserved its popularity if only for the fact that Addison exactly hit the truth, as well as hit upon a method of conveying the truth which pleased the poetical taste of the time. The godlike equanimity of Marlborough has extorted admiration even from

Thackeray; it is certainly the characteristic which, taken with the capacity for action that accompanied it, is the most wonderful and attractive feature of his career. He is never for one moment in a flurry, never at a loss, never lets go of command of himself and of the situation. His panegyrist in the case of the angel, elsewhere remarked that it was not in mortals to command success, but it certainly seems to have been in Marlborough; and it is not merely the fact of this success, but the kind of it that charms the student of its history. Fortune never favoured him very decidedly, and when she did, as in the squabbles of Vendôme and Burgundy at Oudenarde, the use he made of her favours almost made the favours themselves his own merit and doing. To anyone who is conscious of the peculiar delight of 'seeing the game played,' Marlborough gives that delight perhaps more keenly and in larger measure than any character of history, certainly than any general.

There is, of course, what some accomplished cosmopolitans of our time doubtless regard as a more vulgar side to the attraction of his life, and I for one have no hesitation in saying that it does not seem to me vulgar at all. It is that expressed by the old and not very exquisite rhyme—

> Jack of Marlborough,
> Who beat the Frenchmen thorough and thorough.

When Marlborough took up the supreme command it was nearly three hundred years since England had fought on land, and against foes not of her own blood, any but insignificant battles; and over the French, in

particular, no success of any importance had been gained. The advent of William the Deliverer had, indeed, set France and England once more thoroughly by the ears, but the result had hitherto been little but some more or less honourable beatings. With Marlborough's appearance things at once changed. The force of native English soldiers under his command was at no time very great, but it was sufficient to give the country something more than a share in the mere fighting part of his victories; and in point of generalship the most prejudiced enemy could not deny that Europe did not hold the Englishman's superior, while not merely friends, but impartial judges, would have been unanimous in agreeing that it did not hold his equal. A slight, if not a reproach, of centuries was rolled away from the nation in the course of those ten years.

It is for this, first of all, that Englishmen ought to reverence the memory, stained as it is, and even if it were worse stained than it is, of Jack of Marlborough.

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